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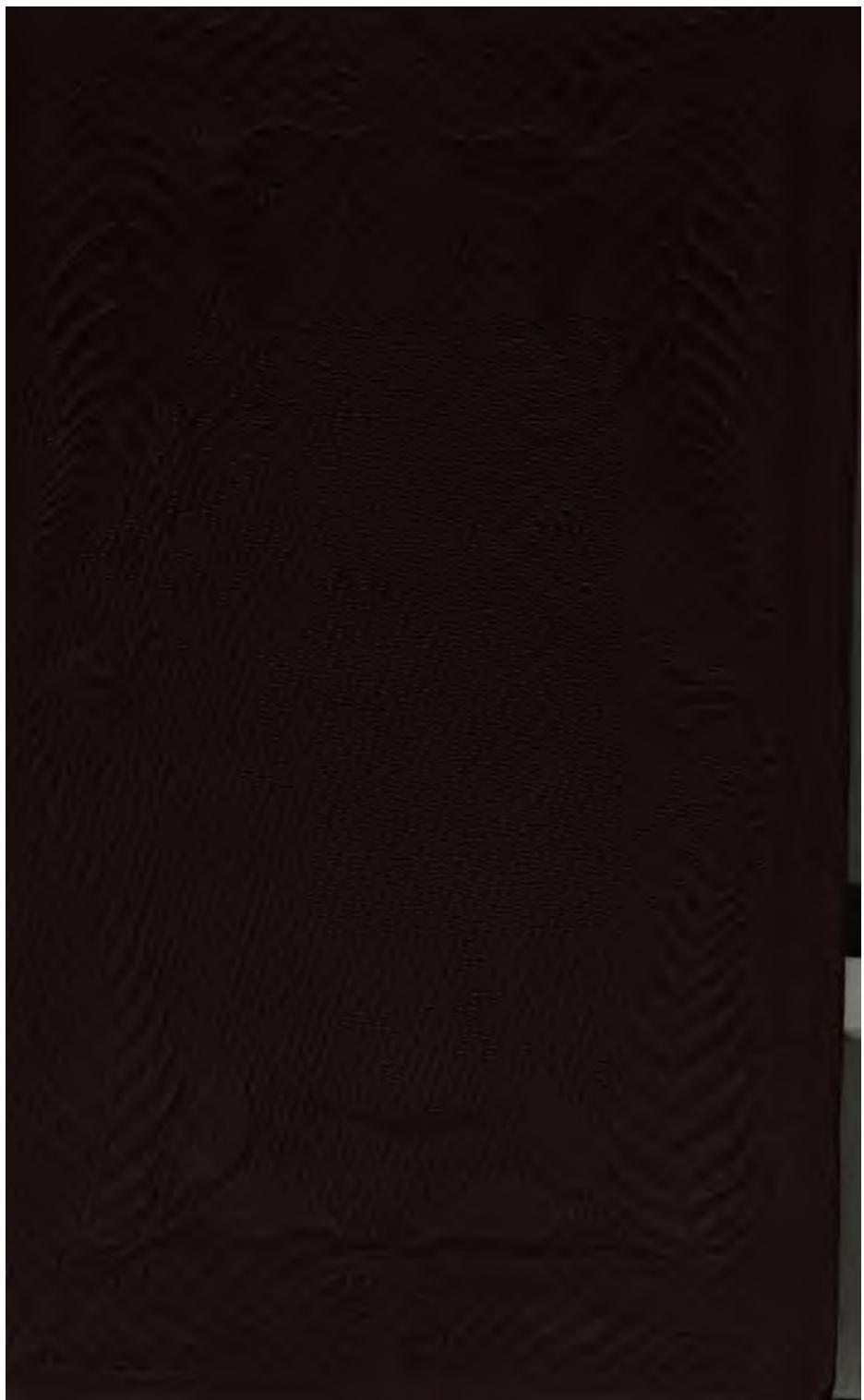
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VONVED THE DANE:

COUNT OF ELSINORE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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LONDON:

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1861.



## P R E F A C E.

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The Author desires to state that "VONVED" is the work of an Englishman who has sojourned in Denmark; and that it originally appeared in the "Dublin University Magazine."

LONDON,  
April 22, 1861.



# VONVED THE DANE:

## COUNT OF ELSINORE.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### INTRODUCTORY.

IN 1849 I resided for a few months near the famous fishing village of Newhaven, on the shore of the Firth of Forth. Within a stone's cast there was a cottage, where a stranger also sojourned. He was apparently a morose, unsocial being, and frequently as I had met him during our mutual wanderings along the sea-shore from Granton to Cramond, I had never yet succeeded in inducing him to enter into conversation. He was a tall, gaunt, dark-complexioned man, of fifty, or thereabouts, and although invariably attired in a very plain, not to say coarse fashion, there was a something in his mien that stamped him a gentleman born. His aspect was wild and melancholy, and his voice had a bitter, wailing intonation, suggestive of a life of

sorrow and strife—perhaps also of sin and crime. I grew interested in this singular personage, and knowing that *his* landlady was a sworn gossip of *mine*, I availed myself of this channel to acquire information concerning him. All that even his own landlady knew, was, that he came to the neighbourhood of Newhaven a twelvemonth before, and had ever since been her lodger. The name he gave was Marmaduke Dunraven, an “unco queer-fashed” name, as she observed; but what his profession was, or had been, she could not even guess. He appeared to have a small yet regular income, lived economically, and paid her punctually. He had not a single acquaintance, shunned all observation, and was exceedingly reserved. He spent his time out of doors in sea-side rambles, and when in doors, did nothing but write, and pour over old manuscripts and books in divers unknown tongues. He would sometimes mutter to himself what she called “heathen gibberish” for hours, when a “dark fit” came over him, but she nevertheless thought him a good man at heart, whatever his former life might have been, concerning which she had “her misgivings”—and instanced several acts of charity and real benevolence he had performed towards the poor fisher folks and their families. His correspondence was very limited, for he had only received three letters during his year’s sojourn. And

this was all that honest Luckie Macrae could tell of her inexplicable lodger.

One evening I pondered the matter over, and, shaking the ashes out of my pipe, exclaimed, "There is a Mystery in our village—unquestionably, a Mystery!"

About a week subsequently a fearful storm raged all day and night, and from my window I watched the foaming sea with great anxiety, for I knew that a large fleet of the open fishing-boats were out. As I looked sympathizingly at the groups of fisher-wives in their picturesque attire, I thought how mournfully true was the song of "Caller Herrin':"—

" Wha'll buy caller herrin'?  
 They're bonnie fish and hailsum fairin';  
 Wha'll buy caller herrin'  
     New drawn frae the Forth?  
 When ye were sleepin' on your pillows  
 Dream'd ye ought o' our puir fellows,  
 Darkling, as they faced the billows,  
     A' to fill the woven willows? \*

" Wha'll buy my caller herrin'?  
 They're no brought here without brave darin';  
 Buy my caller herrin',  
     Ye little ken their worth.  
 Wha'll buy my caller herrin'?  
 Oh! ye may call them vulgar fairin';  
 Wives and mothers, 'maist despairin',  
     Ca' them liese e' men!"

\* "Woven willows"—i.e., the *creel*, a species of basket in which the fisher-wives carry the herrings for sale.

A bright calm morning succeeded the storm. I mingled among the fisher-folks, all of whom knew me by sight, and asked what tidings they had about their friends at sea. A diversity of opinion prevailed; but I was glad to learn that the oldest and most experienced concluded that the boats had run for shelter into the harbours along the south-eastern coast.

As I was returning home who should run out of her cottage to accost me but Luckie Macrae. The good woman was evidently much excited, and the moment she came up she vehemently cried—

“Eh, sir! but what an awfu’ nicht I hae gane through! Ye hae heerd, nae muckle doot, aboot it a’?”

I imagined she alluded to the storm, and the dubious fate of the fishermen at sea, but she quickly undeceived me.

“ ’Deed it’s no that. Ye dinna ken, but oh, sir, ye *maun* gang intil the hoose and see him! He’ll no last mair than till the turning o’ the tide, I’m thinking, and what maun a puir lone body like me do in siccan a strait? Lordsake, sir, come alang, for ye can speak wi’ him, and will understand him, and that’s mair than the likes o’ me can do.”

“What, is it your lodger? Is he ill, or dying, as you seem to fancy?” said I, astonished.

“Fancy! deil hae’t, there’s no a bit o’ fancy aboot

it. The doctor says he canna bide ower the day, and it's no impossible he may flit awa' in twa or three hoors. Eh, Lordsake, it's a' thegither extraordnar'!"

Shocked at this intelligence, I unhesitatingly accompanied Luckie into her house, where she bade me sit down a moment in her own little parlour, ere introducing me to her dying lodger in his room overhead.

"Bide a wee, sir," said she, and bustling to the closet, she brought forth a bottle and glasses, saying, "Ye maun e'en tak' schnaps afore ye gang intil yond' puir creetur, for ye will see an awsome sight, and aiblins hear uncanny things, I dinna ken. Eh, sir, the way he has talked and maundered all night lang was fearfu'!"

She then rapidly related to me the whole history of his sudden illness. It appeared that he was in his usual health until the previous morning, when the postman brought him a letter, and when he had read it she avowed that he gave an "eldritch screech," and raved like a man demented. She was alarmed, and attempted to soothe and condole with him, supposing that he had received news of some domestic calamity, but he took not the slightest notice of her presence, and after reading the fatal letter over and over again, he thrust it in the fire, and in a state of frightful agitation opened his drawers and cast heap after heap

of papers and documents on the floor, all of which he successively thrust between the bars of the grate, muttering to himself like a maniac all the while. Poor Luckie was so alarmed that she ran out of the room, and he instantly locked himself in, and remained tolerably quiet for several hours, until she was startled by a heavy fall on his floor, succeeded by struggling. Running up stairs she knocked at the door, but received no reply beyond a stifled groan. Luckie then flew for help, and the door was forced open by the fishermen she had summoned. An appalling sight met their view. The books and other little properties of the unfortunate gentleman were scattered in every direction, and he himself was lying in an insensible condition on the floor, soaked in blood. At first they imagined he had cut his throat or stabbed himself, but they soon perceived he had simply burst a blood-vessel from mental excitement. He was immediately placed in his bed, and a doctor did all that human skill could to promote his recovery. The unhappy man by degrees became fully sensible, and his first enquiry was addressed to the doctor, whom he besought to tell him whether he was or was not in mortal danger? The reply, couched gently but implicitly, was in the affirmative, whereupon the patient manifested little emotion, merely remarking that for his part he was not in such love with life as to murmur

at the prospect of exchanging it for a better state of being. The doctor felt it a duty to pointedly ask poor Dunraven whether he would not wish for his friends to be instantly communicated with, but the response was a stern negative. In vain did the worthy doctor press the point, for Dunraven decisively replied that there was no one living whom he cared should know whether he was alive or dead.

The doctor gave imperative orders to Luckie and her gossips to keep the dying man—for dying he was, and no earthly power could long avert the doom—as quiet as possible; and meanwhile he sent a friend of his, a clergyman, to visit, and pray with and for the friendless stranger. Dunraven thanked the minister for his attendance, listened attentively to his religious exhortations, and fervently cried “Amen” to the prayer uttered on his behalf by the kneeling divine.

All night the landlady said he had remained awake, and notwithstanding his bodily exhaustion his mind was evidently preternaturally active, and he had muttered to himself for hours in a way she could not understand. The doctor had repeatedly called and done his utmost, and now he had just told her that her lodger could not possibly survive the day.

When Luckie concluded, I expressed my anxious wish at once to visit this mysterious man, and she led me to his room. On entering, the woman in

attendance made a sign of caution, as the patient had sunk in a troubled sleep. I stepped lightly to his bed, and silently contemplated the appalling example before me of the consequences of yielding to unbridled passion, no matter how evoked. He laid flat on his back, with both arms stretched on the outside of the coverlet, and the clothes partially thrust off his breast by his own unconscious act. His lineaments were deadly white—and this struck me the more as, when in health, his complexion was very dark—but calm and indicative of extreme physical prostration. His features were strongly marked, and his grizzled hair was yet matted in some places with gouts of dry blood. A small streak of bloody foam slowly oozed at the corners of his mouth when his lips nervously twitched. Both hands were firmly clenched, and once or twice he uplifted and slightly shook them with what seemed a menacing air.

In a few minutes he gave a prolonged sigh, and awoke. He turned over on his right side, and his wild dark eyes gazed first at his landlady and then at myself. He recognised me instantly, and nodded his head, but did not speak. I drew nearer, and expressing my sympathy with his condition, said that I had taken the liberty to call upon him to offer my services in any shape he would command, adding that I knew by personal experience what it

is to be stretched on a bed of sickness in a strange land.

He smiled faintly, and offered me his hand to shake.

"You are very kind, sir," said he, "but you are in error when you suppose me to be a foreigner."

"Pardon me, but cannot I communicate on your behalf with your friends?"

"Friends!" exclaimed he, bitterly, "I have no friends, and if I had, I would rather die unknown to them."

"It is very shocking!" I involuntarily murmured.

"Not more shocking than true;" was the cool response. "But you mean kindly—pray be seated."

I willingly complied.

"My hours," resumed he, "are numbered—it may be my very minutes—and I wish to turn my face to the wall. You are a stranger, but you say that you will do all that you can for me?"

"Your last wishes shall be solemnly fulfilled to the utmost in my power."

"Thanks."

He beckoned to his landlady, and poor Luckie approached, with her apron to her eyes, for with all his eccentricities, she had grown much attached to her lodger.

"Open the bottom drawer," said he, pointing to

a cabinet, "and bring the box you will find in it."

Luckie did as desired, and drew forth a small iron box, which she placed on a chair within his reach. He pressed a secret spring in its side, and the lid flew open. He then emptied the contents on the coverlet of the bed, having previously been propped up with pillows at his own request. Those contents appeared to be souvenirs. There was a locket or two, a small French Testament, a pocket compass, a silver snuff-box, a finely embroidered muslin handkerchief, a curious gold seal, a book-mark of green silk, and a miniature portrait in a plain ebony case, with a long black ribbon looped to it. The dying man took up one article after another, and I observed that he set his teeth firmly together as he did so. The embroidered handkerchief he clutched in his hand, and his lips quivered with suppressed emotion as he laid it by his side. One by one he replaced in the box every other article except it and the miniature. The latter he held in both hands, and gazed at it absorbingly. At length tears started in his eyes and slowly trickled down his wasted cheeks. I obtained a single glance at the portrait, and perceived that it was that of a beautiful girl, with her autograph at the bottom. What the name was, however, I did not decipher. He grasped the handkerchief anew, and pressed it to his face, murmuring—

“There, it has wiped away the last tears I shall ever shed !”

The next moment he imprinted a long, clinging kiss on the miniature, and passing the ribbon round his neck, placed the portrait over his heart with the back part of the frame uppermost. Then he thrust the handkerchief upon it, and carefully buttoned his shirt over all. I guessed what was about to ensue.

Turning to me, he fixed his piercing eyes full on mine, as though he would read my very soul, and hoarsely cried—

“You will sacredly keep a promise you make to a dying man, unknown though he be ?”

“By my dearest hopes, I will !”

“Then hearken. When I am dead let no hand remove this miniature and handkerchief from my cold breast—let no eye even look upon them—and let them be buried with me. Do you promise ?”

“Most solemnly I do.”

“Swear it !” exclaimed he, with startling energy, suddenly taking the little French Testament from the box, and placing it in my hand, “swear by your faith in this book that you will do all that I require !”

I kissed the Testament, and exclaimed—

“I will do it, so help me, God !”

“I am content,” sighed he, sinking back, “and now I shall die happily !”

The landlady offered him a mixture left by the doctor, and he swallowed it with avidity. Then he roused himself, and exclaimed almost cheerfully—

“My time draws nigh—death is shaking my last sands of life!”

“Do you think your dissolution so near?” said I, whilst a feeling of profound awe crept over me; for never yet had I sate by a death-bed, and witnessed the last struggle between time and eternity in a mortal breast.

“Ay,” murmured he, rather soliloquizing than replying to me, “for *she* hovered around me last night, radiant in her immortal loveliness—a loveliness wondrous even on earth, but transcendent now that she soars on angel-wing in Paradise—and she pointed Heavenward, and smiled, and beckoned me to come and share her blissful abiding place for aye. Ere another midnight I shall be with her.”

“To whom do you allude?” I ventured to ask.

An inexplicable smile flitted athwart his lineaments, and a dazzling unearthly gleam shot from his eyes.

“What have I been saying? It is nothing!” and the smile deepened in its mysterious potency.

He passed his hand once or twice over his brow, and then in a low abstracted voice asked for his writing-desk. It was held to him, and opening it,

he took from out a private drawer a small roll of bank-notes.

"Here," said he, "you see all the money I am possessed of—but no matter! there is more than I have lived to spend."

"Have you any instructions to give for its disposal?"

"Why, yes, 'twill be better. Write down what I dictate."

I dipped a pen, and taking a sheet of paper prepared to write down literally his last bequests.

"I have here," said he, "seventy-five pounds. I wish to be buried as privately and cheaply as possible. Remember that."

"It shall be as you desire."

"Not at this place," continued he. "Take me to Cramond\* churchyard—'tis a sweet spot, and I have often thought of late that I should like to sleep there. Near the wall are two grand old sycamore trees, and I wish to be buried between them, for when the wind blows, their gnarled interlaced limbs will play a requiem as wild and melancholy as his life has been who will rest below."

I shuddered at this strange fancy; but I had my-

\* Cramond is a fine old village a few miles further up the Firth, and, although close upon the shore, it is embosomed with trees, and situated in the midst of lovely rural scenery.

self often stood beneath the churchyard wall, and listened to the very peculiar *eerie* moaning the fantastic limbs of the ancient trees in question make in windy weather, and therefore I knew Dunraven's mind was not wandering.

"Rear no sculptured emblem, no stone, no memorial over me, but plant a red-rose tree at my head, and a cypress at my feet. *She*," sadly added he, "was the rose, and *I* the cypress."

After a pause—"Be sure," reiterated he, eagerly, "that you raise no stone; let my grave be nameless; let there be nought to indicate where the wanderer found his final abiding place on earth."

I carefully noted down all he said, and assured him that his minutest requests should be literally complied with.

"And now," resumed he, "for the disposal of my little all. Let the physician and those who have attended me be duly paid, and when the expenses of my funeral are also deducted, I bequeath the entire residue of the money to my honest landlady here. She is a poor widow, and has been unremitting in her kind attentions to me during the whole of my sojourn with her."

Poor Luckie was so overcome at this speech that she sobbed like a child, and moaned—

"Nae, nae, it's you who have been owre gude to

me and my poor feytherless bairns, for ye hae a kind feeling heart o' yeer ain, and I always said it! Eh! it's no the siller that I wad value a bodle, gin' I could ainly see ye weel ance mair."

Dunraven looked kindly at her, and shook his head in silence. He next bequeathed to me the whole of his books, manuscripts, and little personal souvenirs, in spite of my reluctance to accept them. He was peremptory on this point, and at length I acceded. His worldly matters were now arranged, he said, to his perfect satisfaction, and he sank back for awhile, and covered his eyes with one hand, whilst the fingers of the other rapidly opened and closed over the coverlet, with that clutching motion so common in the case of the dying. Soon he aroused himself, and requested that the window of his room, which overlooked the sea, might be thrown wide open. This was done, and as he reclined back on the pillows he had a full view of the beautiful broad Firth, and the sunlit hills of the opposite coast of Fife. Long and earnestly, with an expression of mingled pleasure and pain, did he gaze, and his eye glanced understandingly at the different vessels in sight—some at anchor in the roads, others under sail up or down the Firth.

"Never more," exclaimed he, sighing heavily, "shall I feel the bounding motion of a buoyant bark! Many's the cruise that I have made on nearly every

ocean and sea of this world, but my voyage of life is ended, and I shall soon anchor in the ocean of eternity."

"You have been a sailor?"

"A sailor! ay, and what is more than a sailor, a thorough seaman," answered he, emphatically; and even in the hour of death an expression of stern professional pride uplift his speaking lineaments. "There are countries, sir, where the name and fame of the Count of Elsinore will be remembered generations hence; and when they speak of the noble Rover of the Baltic, they will not forget his faithful friend and officer, whose last moments you, an unknown stranger, have generously come to soothe."

"A rover!" ejaculated I.

"I have said it—and truth is generally uttered by dying lips."

"And were *you*," I half whispered, "once a rover?"

"I shared the fortunes of my noble and dearly-loved friend, the Count of Elsinore!" answered he, firmly, and in a manner that forbade further question. But he added, in a gentle and significant tone, "I have bequeathed you all my papers, and you will learn from them whatever you wish to know of the career of us both."

A deep silence ensued, broken only by the smo-

thered sobs of Luckie Macrae. The day was warm and still—not a breath of air was wafted through the open window. Dunraven continued to gaze steadily on the glittering waters of the Firth, but his mind was far away ; he was mentally retracing the stormy adventures of his youth and manhood—adventures which I now began to fear were of a dark and fearful nature.

Suddenly a swallow flew in through the window, swiftly winged its flight thrice around the room, and then fluttered over the head of the dying man, whose preternaturally bright eyes were rivetted upon its movements. Finally, with a mournful farewell twitter, it brushed closely past his face, and darting forth into the open sunny air was seen no more.

“Ah,” exclaimed Dunraven, “well do I understand ye, creature of God !”

This expression, I thought, intimated that he actually regarded the visit of the bird as a message from the unseen world of spirits to warn him that his last moments were at hand, and he possibly also associated its presence with some events in his history then unknown to me.

“Bring me the wine and the goblet you will find in yon old sea-chest!” was the extraordinary direction he immediately afterwards gave to Luckie : “There is,” continued he, “at the bottom of the chest, my

sea-cloak, in which you will find the flask and goblet. That battered old chest has been my companion in all my voyages and wanderings, and the cloak was a gift of my mother when first I went to sea. I wish it to be spread over me for my pall!"

I promised him that this wish should be complied with; and when Luckie had carefully unrolled the cloak, she found, to my astonishment, a long-necked flask of wine, and a large antique Venetian crystal goblet, cut in the most exquisite style, and enriched with sparkling gems, and precious stones, and gilded devices. She mechanically brightened this sumptuous goblet, and Dunraven received it with flashing eye.

"See!" cried he, holding it forth, all glittering in the warm sunbeams, "this has been an heirloom in my family for four long centuries. My father used it only on high festivals, and the night before his death he drained it for the last time. Since then it has never once been filled. I am the last of my race, and it is meet that I quaff my death-draught from it ere it passes into the hands of the stranger. To you," added he, addressing me, "I bequeath it."

I was so amazed at all I saw and heard, that I could only bow my acceptance of the gift.

"That wine," he resumed, "is of a name and quality befitting the lips of a dying man. It is a

flask of rare Cyprus, which once was my father's, and I have always preserved it for an occasion like this."

He here motioned to the landlady to uncork it. She did so, and he received the flask in one hand, and grasping the heavy goblet in the other, steadily poured forth the wine to the lees, and the goblet was brimful. The rich, dark old Cyprus mantled and creamed in its matured strength, and the eye of Dunraven gleamed with a species of fierce exultation as he watched it till the last bubble rose and burst on the surface.

He slowly raised the goblet to his lips, and never lowered his hand until he had drained the last drop. Then he calmly kissed the goblet, set it down by his side, and in an unfaltering but unearthly tone, exclaimed—

"All is ended!"

The next moment he sank heavily backward, and without word, or groan, or sigh, or sign, his spirit fled to its final account.

I sacredly kept my oath to the departed. No prying eye gazed on the miniature and handkerchief on his breast—his cherished old sea-cloak was his pall—all his wishes were scrupulously fulfilled. He was buried precisely where he had indicated, and

heart-warm tears were shed o'er his grave. A red-rose tree was planted at his head, and a cypress at his feet, and the huge old sycamores of Cramond churchyard yet moan a requiem over him. No stone indicates who rests below; but the cypress casts its shadow, and the red-rose sheds its perfumed leaves over the Rover's grave, and the redbreast, in autumn, hops twitteringly away when a stranger approaches to silently muse o'er the nameless mound.

I found that his books—now mine—were all standard works in English, Latin, French, Spanish, and Danish; but the autograph their fly leaves once bore, had been, in every instance, carefully obliterated. Every scrap of writing had been destroyed with the special exception of the large packet of manuscripts he had bequeathed to me. I had not the heart to open this for several weeks, although I knew that unless its contents would cast a light on the history of the deceased, his secret must have perished with him.

At length I examined it, and found that it consisted of a great variety of papers and documents in different hands, together with divers letters and closely-written sheets of notes and memoranda. At the first glance I was confused by the apparent incongruity of the subjects these papers treated of, but on a more regular perusal, incidents which had seemed

inexplicable and contradictory, proved consonant, and each formed a link of a chain. Wild and romantic adventures—deeds of daring—the most powerful passions of human nature—the worst and the best emotions of the soul—these formed the groundwork of the canvas, so to speak ; and in the foreground stood forth a few pre-eminent actors in the drama. Dunraven himself was a prominent character, yet a subordinate one. It was palpable that a material portion of the facts related in these papers had from time to time been made public—but the bare facts only—and other portions which alone could elucidate the mystery enveloping the main incidents, and enhance their interest, had hitherto remained profoundly secret. I now held the key to the entire Romance of Reality ; and as Dunraven had bequeathed me the papers without any restriction as to the use I might be inclined to make of them, I seriously debated in my mind the propriety of condensing them into a narrative of actual facts. So far as Dunraven himself was concerned there could be no objection to this, but as regarded others, mature consideration convinced me that I should not be morally justified in doing such a thing. Were I, however, to weave the narrative into a fictitious shape—to give Reality the outward garb of Romance—no possible harm could accrue. So have I done.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE CASTAWAY.

DURING the summer of 18—, the British barque Camperdown was sailing on the Baltic sea, homeward bound, from St. Petersburg. One stormy night the barque was on a tack under close-reefed topsails, a few leagues to the eastward of the large Danish island of Bornholm, when a man on the look-out reported to the mate who was in charge of the watch, that whilst the moon shone clear of the wild dark clouds scudding athwart the sky, he had fancied that he saw a fragment of a wreck a-head to windward. Thereupon the mate procured the night-telescope, and with its aid he distinctly made out a large spar floating atop a wave, and evidently drifting rapidly towards the barque. There was something attached to the spar, but ere he could distinguish what it was, the entire object disappeared in the trough of the sea. A few minutes later it was again in sight, at a much

less distance, and then the mate could positively discern that a human being was clinging to the spar. On this, he ran below to inform the captain, who hurried on deck, and promptly ordered the ship to be steered so as to near the unfortunate castaway, whilst a boat was made ready for lowering.

In a brief period the ship was hove-to, and the boat was launched and pulled towards the spar. When alongside the latter, the sailors found a man lashed to it, in a state of extreme exhaustion. With great difficulty, owing to the chopping sea, they cut the rope and lifted him into the boat, whence he was speedily transferred to the barque. He was too weak to speak, and the humane captain immediately had him conveyed to the cabin, stripped, and placed in a berth. Stimulants were then administered, and his body was swathed in warm blankets. He speedily revived, and evidently a night's rest was all that was requisite to render him quite convalescent. All night he slumbered heavily, and occasionally murmured words in a foreign language.

The dress of the shipwrecked man, thus providentially rescued, consisted of a pair of seaman's trousers, made of fine blue cloth, a belt of richly embroidered crimson silk (worn in a roll), with pendant tassels descending from the left hip to the middle of the thigh. He had no jacket nor vest. His shirt was

of white linen of extraordinary fineness. He wore thick Iceland stockings, and light shoes, with curious silver buckles. In the belt was stuck a keen-edged dagger in a leather sheath, ornamented with brass. The hilt of the weapon was covered with closely-twisted brass wire, affording a firm grip for the hand. In the trousers' pockets were found a few foreign coins, and a large antique silver snuff-box, with a lengthy inscription in Danish on the lid.

In person, the unknown was of the middle height, but his frame of prodigious muscular development. His hairy chest was of extraordinary breadth, and his limbs were gigantic in size, and one solid mass of muscles, bones, and sinews. His hands were finely shaped. His head was comparatively small but well shaped, and covered with long flossy hair of a very light colour, almost silvery. His features were clearly and finely cut, and their extreme delicacy imparted to them quite a feminine—and yet not an effeminate—expression. His eyes were large, and in colour light-blue. He wore neither whiskers, beard, nor moustache, and his countenance was of that rare kind that requires no such manly embellishments. From the lobes of his small ears, exquisitely chased gold rings were pendent; and on the little finger of his left hand he wore a massive gold signet ring. A deep scar, as though from a cutlass slash, disfigured

his left shoulder, and another cicatrice, apparently caused by a musket ball, in his right side, were observed and commented upon by his rough but kindly nurses. Obviously he was a mariner—yet one of no common stamp—and a foreigner; probably a Scandinavian, or, possibly, a Russian. His age appeared to be thirty odd.

During the night the weather moderated, and almost a calm ensued by daybreak. The kind-hearted captain of the Camperdown had repeatedly looked at the slumbering stranger to see that all was going on well with him, but the latter did not awake from his sleep—so deep as almost to resemble a trance—till noon. The captain was writing at the cabin table when he heard a movement in the berth—which was an open one—and turning round, he perceived the unknown sitting up and gazing at him with an air of singular perplexity. The captain smiled, and exclaimed—

“You wonder where you are, eh? You have fallen into good hands. Do you understand English?”

The stranger gazed steadily at his interrogator, and then replied—

“Yes, I can speak English a little, sir!”

“A little! why you speak it as well as myself;” and in truth he did. “How do you feel yourself now?”

"I am nearly well, and I feel very grateful to you for preserving my life," was the grave and emphatic reply.

"Ay, yours *was* an escape! But touch-and-go is a good pilot, as we say. As to myself I only did my duty—no more than what any man would have done." And the captain briefly related the manner in which his guest was rescued from the wilderness of waters.

The foreigner listened with perfect composure; but his voice had a tone of anxiety as he asked the name and destination of the ship.

"The barque Camperdown of Leith, homeward bound from St. Petersburg. I am her master, and my name is Charles May. But we will overhaul these matters by-and-by. Can you get up, and are you hungry?"

Both questions were answered in the affirmative, and the captain at once ordered the steward to spread the table with the best he had. The stranger's own clothes, which had been dried, were handed to him, and he attired himself in them with an air of quiet satisfaction.

"What dandies and fantastic fellows these foreigners are!" muttered the captain, as he observed the care with which the man disposed his crimson belt, and adjusted its pendant tassels. Having done so, he sat

down to table with his hospitable entertainer, and ate and drank of all that was offered with an appetite that vouched for his perfect convalescence. Captain May congratulated him; but a quiet bow was the only response; and although he plied his knife and fork without intermission, the stranger was abstracted and profoundly thoughtful. The captain, however, naturally thought he had a right to ask some questions, and when the repast was ended, he intimated as much with a seaman's frankness. His guest made a gesture of assent, and regarded him with a keenly scrutinizing gaze.

"What countryman are you?" was the captain's first interrogation.

"Danish," was the laconic reply.

"You speak English wonderfully well!"

"I was taught it when a child, and I have lived in England."

"And what are you?—do you follow the sea?"

"A seaman need hardly ask that!"

"True, brother, there is a sort of freemasonry about us mariners, whatever be our country or our colour. Was your ship wrecked last night?"

"She will never float again: not two of her timbers hang together!" was the reply, spoken with great deliberation, and some bitterness of tone.

"All hands lost?"

"I am saved—thanks to you!"

"Ay, but are you the only one?"

"I believe so; yes, I must be the only man saved."

These ominous words were uttered in a singularly composed manner.

"Bless my heart," ejaculated the honest captain, "that's dreadful! Poor fellows! Well, it's a fate we seamen must always be prepared to meet; and sooner or later it does overtake not a few of us. And how did it happen? Did the craft strike on the Jomfru reef?"

For a moment the Dane hesitated, and then he hastily exclaimed—

"Ah, that frightful reef! its jagged rocks have been the death-cradle of many a brave ship!"

"That they have; and a close shave past them I once had myself in this very ship," rejoined the captain, who was too straightforward to notice that the reply of the Dane was a dubious one—a dexterous evasion of a point-blank query. "And the ship was Danish?"

"Yes."

"Whither bound?"

"Copenhagen."

"Where from?"

"Stockholm."

"And I suppose you were skipper?"

The Dane slightly nodded, and then shook his head sadly.

"Well," cried the worthy captain of the Camperdown, "I daresay it is a painful thing for you to talk about, but have a heart. The best of ships are often lost, however well officered and manned, so cheer up, brother. I dare say that your owners will not be unreasonable when they hear all; and maybe I shall meet you again in command of a better craft by-and-by!"

Had the honest Englishman been a man of greater penetration he would have perceived that his guest did not exhibit much despondency; but to the reverse, was impenetrably calm and phlegmatic. He appreciated, however, the captain's kindly sympathy, and a momentary smile uplift his fair and delicate features.

"What was your vessel?" resumed the captain.

"A brig-skonnert."

"Ay, that's what we call a brigantine, or an hermaphrodite brig. And her name?"

"Enighteens Minde."

"That's Greek to me! Please to write it down that I may copy it correctly in my log."

So saying he handed pen and paper to the Dane, who complied with the request, not without a furtive smile.

"And now tell me your own name, and write it also, for I never can spell any foreign name rightly except by copying it. What is yours?"

This simple and natural question had a singular effect. The Dane started, and gave a rapid searching glance all round, he lifted his head erect, his breast seemed to expand, his light blue eyes, so soft in repose, gleamed keenly, and even fiercely, his placid features flushed with an unmistakable air of defiant pride, and his finely-cut lips distinctly enunciated in a firm, measured tone—

"I am Lars Vonved!"

"Oh, you are Lars Vonved!" echoed Captain May, staring in open astonishment at the attitude and expression of his singular guest; and then he muttered to himself; "Who is Lars Vonved, I wonder. The fellow seems as proud of his name as if he were a Lord High Admiral!"

Whatever might be the secret thoughts and feelings of the Dane he instantly resumed his self-possession and quiet air. He not only wrote his name as desired, but added the date and a few words, and requesting sealing wax and a light, he affixed a seal, using for that purpose the signet-ring on his finger. Then he handed the paper to Captain May, saying, in a peculiarly impressive manner—

"Keep this carefully, the day may come when it will prove of service to you."

Surprised alike at the action and the words, the captain gazed curiously at the document—as it may be termed—which read thus:—

"'Enighteens Minde.'

"'For Charles May, Captain of the Camperdown, of Leith. June 28th, 18—.

"'LARS VONVED.'"

The words were written in the peculiar style used by Scandinavians; and the signature of "Lars Vonved" itself was a very large, bold, and remarkably complicated Gothic autograph, of a kind to be instantly recognisable, and almost impossible to successfully imitate. The seal bore a coat of arms, consisting of an eagle flying with a double-edged sword in its beak, above a ship in full sail. A motto in Danish encircled these emblems, and Captain May inquired its meaning.

"It refers to the emblems, and means in English, '*The ship must sail swiftly lest the eagle drop the sword on her deck!*'"

"Well, that's past a plain seaman's comprehension; its mystical to me!" exclaimed the simple-minded captain.

"It has a secret meaning, Captain May!"

"So it must, Herr Vonved! And I suppose that is your family arms?"

"Not so; it is the private symbol I have myself assumed."

"Do you know, Herr Vonved," confidentially observed the honest veteran shipmaster, "that I myself have sometimes thought of getting a seal cut with emblems, as you call them, of my own invention or choosing."

"Indeed, Captain May; and what do you propose to have engraved?" said Vonved, very blandly.

"Why, what do you say to a compass in the centre, and a marlingspike on one side, and an anchor on the other, for supporters, and waves at the bottom, with 'C. M.' for my name? Ship-shape, eh! Nothing mystical about *that*?"

"Capital, sir! A better and more appropriate device could not be desired!" responded the Dane, with a look of arch amusement.

"Ay, ay, Herr Vonved, I say nothing about your own affair, though it is a little too high flown, and hieroglyphical to my fancy; but let an old sea-dog like me alone for inventing a real mariner's seal."

"And what is to be your motto?"

"My motto? What—ay—what do you think of the three L's?"

"The three L's!"

"Ay, Latitude, Lead, and Look-out! We seamen call them the 'three L's,' you know, and a ship would be badly navigated were they not all attended to."

"Excellent, Captain May! I admire your taste, sir."

The old captain smiled complacently, and placing Vonved's autograph between the leaves of his log-book, he cordially cried—

"Well, Herr Vonved, I hope to safely land you at your own port of Copenhagen, where I have to take in some cargo; and meanwhile you are heartily welcome to share my cabin, and we shall have time to become better acquainted, and to overhaul our old logs together. I'm going on deck, now."

"And I will go with you!"

They ascended together, and Vonved, after looking aloft, and keenly scanning the horizon in every quarter, and glancing at the compass to ascertain the ship's course, courteously thanked the mate for the share the latter had taken in his own marvellous preservation overnight, and then requested to see the look-out man who had first perceived him floating helpless on the spar. The man was called, and Vonved spake a few kindly words to him expressive of his gratitude, and gave him all the money in his pocket, which included a Frederick d'or, and two or three other gold pieces. The bluff English seaman

did not wish to accept them, but the Dane insisted that he should.

Several vessels were in sight, all at a considerable distance. One of them, evidently a very small craft, by-and-by attracted the especial notice of Lars Vonved. His gaze was intently rivetted on her, and at length he said—

“I think I know that Danish *joegt!*”

“A Danish *joegt*, is she?” cried Captain May. “You have keen eyes, Herr Vonved; I could not swear whether she is a Danish *joegt* or an English sloop at this distance, by the naked eye.”

Vonved eagerly seized a telescope, but hardly had he levelled it ere he lowered it again, and coolly slapped the joints together, whilst a smile of singular meaning flitted over his features.

“Do you know her?”

“You shall see, Captain May!” and springing on the quarter-deck bulwark, where he steadied himself against the spanker boom, Vonved untwisted his crimson silk sash, and held it fluttering out as a signal. This sash was about a dozen feet long by two or three in breadth, and in the centre were three large white stars, horizontally disposed.

Captain May levelled his telescope at the strange vessel, to curiously watch whether the signal would be noticed or answered, and in a couple of minutes,

to his astonishment, he beheld a group of four or five men hurriedly gathering together on the quarter-deck of the little craft, one of whom was gazing with a telescope at the barque. It was obvious that the signal had already attracted notice. All doubt was exchanged for certainty, for the flash of a gun was immediately seen, and the Danish *joegt* put forth every stitch of canvas, and stood towards the barque.

"Well, this beats Marryat's signals hollow!" exclaimed the astonished old captain, as Vonved leaped on to the deck, and deliberately folded his sash, and rolled it round his waist again, belt fashion. "They keep a sharp look-out in that craft."

"It is their duty to do so," calmly rejoined Vonved.

The little *joegt* overhauled the barque so rapidly that it was evident she must be a wonderfully fast craft, and when she reached within a few cables' length hove-to, and a Norwegian pram—a small and peculiarly shaped light skiff that will live in the heaviest sea—put off from her side, manned by two seamen, who swiftly pulled to the barque. In a few minutes the pram was alongside, and holding on by a boathook at the mizen-chains.

Lars Vonved, in a tone of prompt command, hailed the men in the pram, who both took off their caps in respectful salute to him.

"Hvorledes gaaer det?" (How is it?) said he.

"Redt godt, Captain Vonved!" (All is right, Captain Vonved!) responded they.

Vonved turned round to the master of the Camperdown, and pointing significantly to the pram and to the *jœgt*, he grasped his hand and wrung it warmly, saying—

"I must now leave you, Captain May, and believe me that I shall never forget that my life has been saved by your ship! Some day or other I may have an opportunity to prove my gratitude!"

"Never mind that; but good-bye: and I wish you well!" heartily responded the captain, who began to feel like a man in a dream.

Vonved lightly swung himself into the pram, and as it pushed off he stood erect, and laying his right hand on his heart, bowed gracefully, and exclaimed, with deep emphasis—

"Preserve what I wrote for you, Captain May, it will be of use hereafter!"

In a brief interval Vonved was on board the *jœgt*, which fired a farewell gun, and filling away, went off in a direction totally opposite to its former course, and soon was a mere speck on the horizon.

## CHAPTER III.

LARS VONVED.

IN a week's time—having had head winds—the Camperdown put into Copenhagen to ship some goods, and Captain May waited as usual on the British consul. After transacting the customary business, the consul said—

“By-the-by, did you pass near Bornholm this homeward passage?”

“Yes, sir, a dozen miles or so to the eastward.”

“When was that?”

“About seven days ago.”

“Indeed. Well, it was just about that time a very extraordinary and awful occurrence took place, intelligence of which has reached Copenhagen, and is causing immense excitement. Here is the account given in *Fædrelandet*—a daily paper—of this morning, which I will translate to you.”

The consul took up *Fædrelandet*, and read as follows—

"Advices just received from Bornholm, communicate intelligence of an appalling nature. The public is aware that for some months past all trace has been lost of the renowned fredlos,\* Lars Vonved. It was believed either that he had perished, or that he and his reckless crew had betaken themselves to another part of the world. We now learn that Vonved was ashore on the island of Bornholm about ten days ago, and that one of his own men betrayed him by giving information to the commander of the troops stationed at Ronne. A plan was immediately arranged to capture him, and this was effected the same night without any resistance; for as soon as Vonved saw that it would be madness to defend himself—he being alone, and surrounded by armed men—he quietly surrendered. He was conveyed on board the 'Falk' (Hawk), brig-of-war, which had just arrived, and placed in a strong room in the hold; but by what seems a fatal oversight on the part of the unfortunate commander of the brig, the desperate prisoner was not ironed.

"The 'Falk' lay at anchor a mile or two from the shore, and shortly after sunset on the 27th—the evening of the outlaw's capture—a horrible explosion took place, and the vessel was blown to pieces. Of all on board only one man escaped. He was picked up by a boat from the shore; and he states his belief that

\* Fredlos—*i. e.* outlaw; proscribed man.

Lars Vonved, knowing the doom that awaited him at Copenhagen, by some means broke through the bulkhead that separated him from the powder-magazine, and crowned his long list of crimes by deliberately blowing up the vessel, preferring to perish in this manner rather than on the wheel. The single survivor is also of opinion that through some culpable negligence of the officers Vonved was not even searched; therefore, supposing he had a dagger or strong knife concealed on his person, he might soon cut his way into the powder-magazine: and this is probably the plan he adopted.

"Many mangled bodies of the hapless crew have been washed ashore, but no remains of the arch monster himself have hitherto been identified. Doubtless he was blown to atoms when he applied the fatal match."

Captain May listened to this narrative with feelings of extreme perturbation, which was increased when the consul said—

"Did you hear the explosion?"

"No, sir, we neither heard nor saw it. Probably we were too distant, and it was a stormy night, too. What had this outlaw done, sir?"

"Rather ask what he hadn't done!" answered the consul. "If only half that is said of him be true, he was a very incarnation of mischief and subtlety.

For the last half dozen years his name has struck terror in the hearts of his countrymen—that is, if they really are his countrymen, for although he spoke Danish like a native, and resembled a Dane personally, there is, I believe, a mystery about his birth: for the authorities were never able to satisfactorily learn whence he came, nor who were his relatives. The name itself—provided it be genuine—is rather Swedish than Danish; but the man himself always avowed he was a Dane, and it has even been strongly rumoured that he is of a most noble and ancient family. He must have begun his rover's profession betimes, for, I think, he could not be much above thirty when he thus closed his fearful career."

"But his crimes, sir? Was he really a rover?"

"What, Captain May! Have you really never before heard of Lars Vonved, the Baltic Rover?"

"No, sir, I have not; but it is a dozen years since I was last up the Baltic."

"Ah, that accounts for your ignorance. Why, he was a smuggler, pirate, and soforth; dyed in the guilt of a thousand crimes! Such at least is the story, though some people affect to disbelieve the greater portion of his alleged misdoings. All I know is that he has been repeatedly captured, but always escaped, either through bribing his guards, or by the dexterity and dauntless courage, and tremendous

personal strength, he is alleged to possess. I think it must be nearly five years since he was condemned to work in chains a slave\* for life, but he escaped the first time he was set to work on the roads. Subsequently he was recaptured, and many additional atrocious crimes being laid to his charge, he was then condemned to be broken alive on the wheel; but the very night before the day appointed for his execution he escaped from the Tughthuus in a marvellous manner. What is stranger than all, although a very heavy price was set on his head, dead or alive, none of the outcasts with whom he was more or less connected ever betrayed him, and his own crew were said to be thoroughly devoted to him. It would seem, however, if this newspaper account is correct, that one of them has proved a traitor at last."

"After all, the rogue must have had his good points, then," bluntly observed the captain.

"Yes, I believe such was really the case, and very romantic stories have been told of his generosity, and songs have been written and are popularly sung about his exploits."

"And what sort of a fellow was he, sir?"

The consul gave an accurate description of Vonved, explaining that he had never seen him, but that the Danish authorities had caused lithographed portraits

\* In Denmark convicts are called "slaves."

of the outlaw, with a fac-simile of his autograph, to be extensively circulated to aid in his identification and arrest.

" You would know his hand-writing then, sir ? "

" Undoubtedly ; but why do you ask ? "

By way of reply, the captain opened his pocket-book and handed a paper to the consul.

" Camperdown of Leith, June 28th—Lars Vonved," read the latter. " Good heavens ! how came you by this ? "

Captain May related the whole adventure.

" The man bears a charmed life ! " cried the amazed consul. " He is proof to fire and steel, and so he will ever be till the thread of his destiny is reeled off. And you say that he eat and drunk with you, and expressed his gratitude ? "

" He did, sir."

" Well then, depend upon it that he and his lawless crew will never harm you nor yours. He never was known to break his word to friend or foe, and so far from injuring any one who ever served him, even unconsciously, he will risk life to repay them. Take back your precious autograph, Captain May—it is a sort of pass bearing the sign manual and seal of a potent rover—and preserve it carefully, resting assured that if Lars Vonved scuttles half the ships that sail on the Baltic, your barque will never be of the

number. Ah, had you only known who was your guest, and had clapped him in irons, and brought him to Copenhagen, I verily think the king would have made you a knight of the Dannebrog! You have missed both money and honour."

"And I'm not sorry for it," burst from the honest British tar. "Like any honest, God-fearing mariner, I hate and abhor a rover, and heartily wish him a short thrift and a hempen necklace to swing him like a jewel-block at the yard-arm, as he merits. But, sir, it was God's will that we should save his life, and I would not have given the man up under such circumstances, even had I suspected him to be what you describe. A miscreant he may be—ay, must be, if he is really a rover—and he *did* throw dust in my eyes with his yarn about losing his craft on the Jomfru reef—but, somehow I can't think he's half so black as they paint him."

"Well, perhaps not; but let me give you a bit of earnest advice, Captain May. Keep your agency in letting him loose on the world again a profound secret, for I can assure you that the Danish government would look very black if they heard of it. And what they will say or do when he suddenly turns up again, all ripe and ready for mischief, is more than I can imagine. To give you some idea of what this desperate outlaw is capable, read this English version of a

popular ballad, descriptive of his escape from the doom I before mentioned as pronounced against him."

Lars Vonved in strong dungeon lay,  
Condemned to die at dawn of day,  
A black-robed priest he came to pray  
At midnight with Lars Vonved.

"Outlaw, repent!" the holy man  
His ghostly counsel thus began;  
"Confess! repent! for short's the span  
Allotted thee, Lars Vonved."

"We all must die—Heaven's will be done!  
And yet I hope to see the sun  
Rise many a day ere my race be run!"  
Undaunted cried Lars Vonved.

"O, clasp thy guilty hands and pray  
That outraged Heaven in mercy may  
Pardon e'en thee—for at dawn of day  
Thou'l surely die, Lars Vonved!"

"More merciful than man is Heaven!  
And by all my hopes to be forgiven,  
I tell thee, priest, thou oft has shiven  
Worse sinners than Lars Vonved."

"That cannot be," the priest replied,  
"For guiltier wretch yet never died  
Than thou, who'l perish in thy pride,  
At dawn o' day, Lars Vonved!"

Lars Vonved gave a laugh of scorn—  
"Think not, good priest, the coming morn  
Will see the fearless heart out-torn  
From the bosom of Lars Vonved!"

"Farewell, thou boasting fool! I go  
And leave thee to eternal woe!"—  
"Nay, good priest, do not leave me so!"  
Softly cried Lars Vonved.

The priest turned round, and ere he knew,  
Was pinioned, and his mouth gagg'd too,  
His robe stripp'd off, and his hood of blue,  
By the outlaw, bold Lars Vonved.

“Sir priest, I must make free to borrow  
Your dress awhile—but do not sorrow,  
They'll set you free at dawn to-morrow,  
So farewell!” cried Lars Vonved.

The watchful guards as they let him pass,  
Said—“Holy man, has he ta'en the mass?  
Does he repent?” “Ah no, alas!  
Too hardened is Lars Vonved!”

At dawn o' day the dungeon door  
Was open flung, and on the floor  
They found the true priest groaning sore,  
But flown away, Lars Vonved!

“Is this ballad founded on fact, sir?” inquired the captain. “Can it be true that Vonved really escaped in the way it relates?”

“Such is the popular belief; and I never heard any other version of the escape that he undoubtedly effected.”

“Well, sir, I am quite taken aback by the whole affair. To think that a rover has been in my ship—that he has slept in my berth—that he has eat and drunk with me at my table!” and the worthy old captain flushed with mingled feelings of amazement, indignation, and incredulity, at the recollection.

Although Captain May kept a discreet silence concerning the outlaw's preservation, some of his crew, hearing of the explosion of the Danish brig-of-war,

naturally related the circumstance of having rescued a man floating on a piece of wreck in the locality where the catastrophe happened. This speedily reached the ears of the authorities, and the whole truth was wrung from the reluctant captain.

Proclamations were immediately issued in Copenhagen, and distributed all over Denmark Proper, and the Danish Islands, and Sleswig and Holstein, denouncing the new and crowning enormity that Lars Vonved was positively accused of having committed, and relating his own marvellous escape. So important was his recapture deemed, that the Government increased the price on his head to the sum of two thousand five hundred specie-dalers (£562 10s. sterling), and offered a free pardon to any accomplices who would betray him.

The Danish people, generally, were divided between horror of the alleged atrocities of the outlaw, and of a species of superstitious admiration of the almost superhuman manner in which he had hitherto escaped paying the forfeit of his deeds. By an idiosyncracy of human nature, the most detestable and monstrous criminals, if renowned for feats of brilliant and successful daring, rarely fail to excite interest and fearful sympathy in the breasts of the majority of their countrymen. Even the philosopher, who justly condemns the immorality of this morbid feeling, often

himself feels its influence. Thus it was that the last reputed exploit of the greatest modern outlaw of all Scandinavia, the renowned Baltic Rover, added thousands to the ranks of those who half-admired, half-shuddered at his name and fame; yet the very heavy blöd-penge (blood-money) tempted many to watch every opportunity of achieving his capture, or of obtaining information that would lead to it. Besides this, so far as the sailors of the navy, and the land-soldats, and officers of justice were concerned, it was their especial duty to hunt him down, independent of the reward, and that duty they were all anxious to perform. So extreme was the official activity now displayed at every Danish port, and along all the coasts of the mainland and islands, and so strong the assurance of the Governments of the different countries bordering on the Baltic, that they would use their utmost vigilance to arrest the outlaw if he ventured to land on their territories, that the prospect of Vonved's final escape seemed indeed slight. It must be borne in mind that the Baltic is a large inland sea, and that passports are most strictly required to enable the bearer to land, or to travel through the countries bordering upon it. What likelihood was there of Vonved obtaining one, even under false pretences? And even if he did, he would almost certainly be recognised from the description of his

remarkable person, ere he had travelled many leagues.

Wagers were freely laid in Copenhagen that the Baltic Rover would be seized, dead or alive, within thirty days.

## CHAPTER IV.

"THE LITTLE AMALIA."

THE vessel which received Lars Vonved when he bade adieu to his kind preservers of the Camperdown, was one of the smallest of that kind of Danish sea-going craft called *jægts*, and she was a beautiful specimen of her class. Her length was thirty-five feet; her breadth of beam eleven feet; her depth of hold five feet. In her present trim she drew four feet of water forward, and five aft, and, therefore, had not much dry side amidships, but as she had a considerable shear, of course her bows and stern rose comparatively high. Her symmetrical bows were pretty full above the water, but below, their lines were hollow and tapered finely. The stern had a clean run, and the counter was a flat oval, broken by two small slightly-projecting windows, each consisting of a square of thick plate-glass set in an iron frame, which could be removed at pleasure. The

oaken hull was painted a sea-green colour, relieved by a single narrow gold band extending round the vessel, about a foot below the gunwale. Her single dark-varnished mast was of red pine, clear of a single knot, and rose straight as an arrow, and exactly perpendicular, to a great height, terminating above the "eyes" of the shrouds and the "collar" of the stay in a "crown," five or six feet in length, which curved forward and tapered to a point sustaining a small vane. Although carrying no upper sails, she yet could spread a large mass of canvass, comprising gaff and boom mainsail, square foresail, staysail, jib, and flying jib. One very extraordinary peculiarity was the fact that all the sails were dyed black, and the spars and blocks were also of that sombre hue. On board all was as neat as could possibly be. The low bulwarks were painted blue inside, with a bright crimson stripe down their middle; the deck was holly-stoned white as snow; every loose rope was carefully coiled down; the nicest order and arrangement prevailed. Just abaft the mast was a large hatchway, covered with a handsome grating painted white, and aft there was a little poop-deck about seven feet in length, with a companion in front to afford ingress to the cabin. There was a low skylight to this poop-deck, and the long tiller with which the vessel was steered only just cleared it. On the whole, the pretty

little *joëgt* was evidently not engaged in the ordinary pursuits of honest gainful commerce, but either was a pleasure boat or a craft of a very questionable character.

When the pram which received Lars Vonved from the Camperdown, came alongside the *joëgt*, he lightly swung himself on deck, and was received by the skipper, who bowed low and gracefully, exclaiming—

“*Velbecommen hjem, Capitain Vonved!*” (Welcome back !)

The seamen on board, and those in the pram, also doffed their caps, and echoed the national expression of welcome—national, at least, as concerns the maritime people—“*velbecommen hjem!*” in hearty tones.

“*Mange taks, min vens!*” (many thanks, my friends), was Vonved’s answer, and he hastily shook hands with the skipper, and then directed the pram to be swung to the davits at the *joëgt*’s stern, and a parting gun to be fired. One of the two small bronze signal guns, fixed on swivels on the pawn-windlass bitts, was promptly fired,\* and the pram hoisted chock-a-block to the davits, and then turned bottom upwards, and secured in such a position as to be ready for immediately launching again, and yet to lie without obstructing the movements of the tiller, or obscuring the light from the cabin stern windows. Vonved next ordered the helm to be put up, and the

jøegt to be kept away as near the wind as suited her best point of sailing ; his object being to increase her distance from the Camperdown as rapidly as possible.

The bonny little joëgt was handled by her powerful and experienced crew as easily as a mimic cock-boat is turned and guided by a schoolboy. She bowed over to the freshening breeze that whistled merrily through the rigging, until her lee-gangway dipped in the surging flood, and then she rushed steadily ahead, dashing aside the creamy spray from the crests of the waves which harmlessly broke against her bows, or, when an occasionally heavier gust of wind jerked at her tacks and stays, she would shake her head saucily, uplift her bows with a snort and gurgle of the water eddying round her stem, and leap bodily over the advancing waves.

Vonved's eyes glistened with keen pleasure as he saw how quickly his joëgt would be "hull down" to the barque, and as he stood on the weather-quarter gangway, he struck the palm of his right hand smartly on the top of the bulwark, and apostrophizing the vessel as though she were a living creature, ejaculated—

"Ah, my own sweet Little Amalia! thus dost thou ever serve me in the hour of need! A faithful craft hast thou been, and so thou wilt ever be unto me! Verily, I have need of thee."

As though his Little Amalia (as the craft was named, after one whom he devotedly loved), were really the sentient being he almost seemed to believe her, she bounded forward more vigourously than ever, sending up the spray from her weather-bow high above the bulwarks in showers that sparkled brilliantly in the sun ere falling far to leeward.

The crew of the *joegt* consisted of four men and a skipper. The men were all middle-aged, grave, steady-looking seamen, and when they had made such alterations as were necessary in the disposition of the sails, three of them—the fourth having the tiller in hand—clustered together and stood with folded arms a little abaft the mast, gazing curiously, yet respectfully, at “Capitain Vonved,” as they called him. Near to the latter stood their own “skipper,” who merits a more particular description. His age did not exceed two-and-twenty, and he was tall, slim, and decidedly gentlemanly in his appearance and manners. His fair complexion, light blue eyes, flaxen hair, and the general contour of his features, bore testimony to his Scandinavian lineage. He was a handsome, intelligent-looking young man, and his dress set off his figure to advantage. It consisted of wide blue trowsers of fine cloth, a vest of dark velvet buttoned closely up to the throat, and a blue cloth surtout confined round the waist with a simple belt.

of black varnished leather. His neck was bare, the white collar of his shirt being turned down, and tied with a little bow of black ribbon. On his head he wore an ordinary undress navy cap, with the usual anchor buttons, but the gold band was merely a narrow stripe. This young man, after his first greeting, had only spoken to Lars Vonved in answer to one or two questions the latter put, but stood with an air of deference, yet friendly familiarity, awaiting the further pleasure of the redoubted Rover of the Baltic.

Suddenly Vonved turned towards him and said—

“ You little anticipated seeing a signal of mine from yonder barque, Herr Lundt ? ”

“ I did not, Captain Vonved, and at first I rather feared it was an enemy’s ruse, but thanks to a good glass I recognised you, and, therefore, had no hesitation in answering the signal and bearing down.”

“ You did well, sir, and right glad was I to see the Little Amalia dashing to my rescue.”

“ Rescue ! Captain Vonved ? ”

“ So I may phrase it, sir, although I was in no danger so far as the goodwill of the captain and crew of the Camperdown was concerned. You would know her again ? ”

“ I should, Captain Vonved.”

“ And you, my Vikings ? ” addressing the deeply attentive crew, who of course heard every word of

the conversation, "you are old seamen, and would know that barque again by her build and rig among a thousand—is it not so?"

The men raised their caps in the ready, courteous manner, common even to the poorest and lowliest seamen of Scandinavia, and promptly answered in the affirmative.

"Then, one and all will bear in mind that the good old captain of that barque is my friend—I owe my life to that ship and her crew—and I order you at all times to aid that captain and ship at the peril of your lives should there ever be occasion, and opportunity serve."

"Ja, ja! Capitain Vonved;" gravely responded they, and their looks betokened how much they desired to know in what manner his life had been jeopardized and saved. He perceived this, and with an air in which kindness and authority were singularly blended, he said—

"I know your faithful affection for me, my brave men, for you have all been oft tried and never yet found wanting, and at the proper time you shall know what has befallen me since we last parted. Herr Lundt, let the man who acts as your steward serve to them a couple of bottles of your best wine to drink my safe return."

The young officer—as he may not improperly be

called—bowed, and beckoning to the seaman who acted as steward, gave him an order. The man dived into the cabin and quickly re-appeared with the wine; when Vonved said in a smiling, friendly way—

“Go forward, my Vikings, and enjoy yourselves; but neglect not to keep a good look-out and report to us when necessary. Herr Lundt, we will now retire to the cabin.”

The officer again bowed, descended first, and was followed by the extraordinary man, whose will appeared to be law on board.

The cabin of the *Amalia* was, of course, small, and yet it was considerably larger than would have been supposed by one who judged of its size merely by that of the entire hull. It had been skilfully fitted up so as to make the most of the circumscribed space, and as the little *joëgt* was not intended to carry cargo, except of a certain kind which occupied very small bulk, the cabin included all that part of the vessel beneath the poop-deck, and two neat little state-rooms were situated forward of it, in what in a large vessel would be called the steerage. They communicated with the cabin through doors in the bulkhead of the latter. The cabin itself was nine feet in breadth by seven feet in length. In the centre stood an oblong table covered by a snow-white damask cloth, and all round were lockers provided with crimson silk cushions,

to serve as seats. The front of these lockers and all the panelling of the cabin was of rich mahogany, polished so brightly that the pier glass suspended on one side was almost superfluous. The moulding filling up the angle between the panelling and the deck overhead was gilt, and the deck itself (forming the ceiling) was beautifully painted with fanciful and allegorical devices and figures, wreaths of flowers, &c. From the deck was suspended a large antique bronze oil lamp, of peculiar formation, having three projecting dragons' heads, the mouths of which each contained a wick for burning. Between the two windows at the stern was a semicircular zebra-wood locker, the front of which was inlaid with various precious woods in the most elaborate manner, so as to represent the mariner's compass, and in a small shield in the centre of this fanciful compass was painted an exact fac-simile of the mysterious symbols and motto of Vonved's signet ring—an eagle flying with a double-edged sword in its beak above a ship in full sail. This locker was ostensibly supported by a species of bracket, a solid piece of Danish oak exquisitely carved in the semblance of the conventional head and flowing beard of old father Neptune. Along the panelling on each side of the cabin were arranged several weapons offensive and defensive. The little cabin was excellently lighted, not only by the two

stern windows, but also by the large skylight overhead, which being composed of richly-stained glass, cast a warm and varied light below. A small stove of polished steel, with brass fittings, and a bright copper fire, stood on one side the vessel against the bulkhead, and may be said to complete the chief fittings of the snug and tasteful little cabin, in which a man of ordinary stature could just stand upright.

On entering, Vonved sat down at the end of the table in a position which enabled him to command a view of the sea through either of the stern windows, and motioned to Herr Lundt to seat himself opposite, but the latter hesitated, and remarked in a whisper—

“Had I not better close the companion-way, Captain Vonved, if you wish to converse without risk of being overheard?”

“Yes, do so.”

Lundt first spoke to the steersman, and bade him keep the course which had been given, and immediately report any sail which hove in sight, or any material change of wind, and then carefully closed the two little folding-doors forming the front of the companion, and drew the slide closely over.

“Now for a bottle of your best!” cried Vonved, cheerfully.

“What wine will you prefer, Captain Vonved?”

“Champagne, let it be, for my heart is light and

grateful now that I once more feel myself afloat in my first love—the dainty ‘Little Amalia !’ ”

The young man hastened to raise a trap door in the flooring of the cabin, beneath which the runs of the vessel formed a cool and capital wine cellar, and from thence he extracted a couple of bottles of champagne, which, with the proper glasses, he placed on the table.

“Would you take any repast also, Captain Vonved ? I can give you some fine fresh lax, and some”—

“No, sir, I require nothing at present; and I must apologize,” added Vonved, with an air of high and courtly breeding, “for permitting you to act as steward, but I have reason to wish for our interview to be private.”

“Oh, Captain Vonved,” eagerly cried Lundt, blushing and bowing, “how can you say that ? You know that it is a pleasure and a privilege for me !”

Lars Vonved gazed half-mournfully and half-affectionately at the flushed ingenuous features of his young officer, and sighing deeply, he slowly echoed—

“A pleasure and a privilege ! And do you esteem it such to be the companion, the familiar friend of an outlaw, a doomed man, one denounced as an arch miscreant, one upon whose head a heavy price is set by the government of his country ?”

“I do !” answered the young man, energetically.

"You have saved my life—you have honoured me with your confidence—and I know that he whom men call the Rover of the Baltic is one whose qualities are worthy of friendship and admiration. Yes, I am linked to your fortunes, be it for good or for evil, and I am proud of the friendship of the Count of Els—"

"Hold!" interrupted Vonved, raising his forefinger significantly. "I am only Lars Vonved, Captain Vonved! But as for what you assert, be it so; all I can say is that I trust that if your friendship and connection with me does not operate to your weal, it may not be to your woe! And now let us drink!"

The glasses were brimmed with the cool sparkling beverage of the sunny South, and silently bowing to each other, the two friends quaffed.

"Truly wine gladdens the heart of man, as was said of old," exclaimed the Rover; "and yet I have been refreshed and gladdened more in my time by a stinted draught of water—neither pure nor sparkling—than by any wine I ever drunk."

"That would be in the tropics, sir?"

"In the tropics—and elsewhere."

"I, also, Captain Vonved, know by fearful experience the value of a draught of water!" Lundt observed, seeing that Vonved was not indisposed to

prolong a desultory conversation ere discussing matters of present and weighty interest.

"You, Herr Lundt! When and where?"

"Off the coast of Africa."

"I was not aware that you had ever sailed on the main ocean?"

"I believe I never mentioned it to you before, Captain Vonved, that in my twentieth year, I, for the first and only time, sailed on the Atlantic, and very disastrous the outward voyage proved. To my dying day, I shall never forget the sufferings I underwent—for more than the ordinary anguish which befalls a man in many years, was condensed, as it were, in the space of a few hours."

"The ship was becalmed and short of water?"

"Not so, Captain Vonved. The sufferings from thirst to which I alluded were experienced only by myself—a solitary wretch, tossed helplessly about, the sport of every wave."

These words caused Vonved to steadily regard his companion with a look of surprise and suddenly aroused interest.

"Ah," said he, very quietly, "I have myself undergone a somewhat similar adventure, although, in my case, a burning tropical sun did not increase my sufferings."

"Indeed, sir; where was that?"

"Here, in the Baltic; and it occurred only yesterday."

"Yesterday, Captain Vonved? Impossible!"

"Why impossible, Herr Lundt?" drily demanded the Rover. "The barque which is yet in sight picked me up yesterday evening, clinging to a spar, almost at my last gasp, and, as I believe, the solitary survivor of a terrible catastrophe."

"The young man started, became deadly pale, and faintly cried—

"Oh, Captain Vonved! can it indeed be that the 'Skildpadde' and her brave crew have perished?"

"Not so, my young friend, no calamity has happened to her, I trust. It is the 'Falk' that has perished, and every soul on board, myself excepted."

"The Falk! the brig-of-war cruising off Bornholm! and you were on board *her*?"

Vonved calmly nodded.

"As a prisoner, Captain Vonved?"

"As a prisoner, sir; what else should I be?"

"Then you were betrayed?"

"I should not otherwise have been captured, as you may well believe," answered Vonved, with a bitter smile.

"And who was the traitor—do you know?"

"I do know, Herr Lundt, and fearfully shall he expiate his treachery. As Vonved uttered these

words, his usual calm imperturbability instantly disappeared, and his lips quivered, revealing his broad white teeth closely clenched, his features writhed with passion, and his eyes flashed with a fire all the more terrible because so rarely evinced.

This emotion, however uncontrollable it might be at the moment, was merely transient in duration, for in a few seconds Vonved's countenance resumed its gentle yet thoughtful expression.

Then Vonved, in a low impressive tone, calmly narrated to his astonished companion the story of his betrayal, capture, and ultimate escape.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE PAINTER OF SVENDBORG CASTLE.

At the south-eastern extremity of the large and fertile Danish island of Funen is situated the little port of Svendborg, a pleasant old town of about four thousand population, cosily nestled on the shore of a fine semicircular bay, across the entrance to which lie two long, low, narrow islets, respectively called Thorö and Taasinge. Two or three years prior to the time of this narrative, a young wandering artist, who called himself Bertel Rovsing, came to Svendborg, where he lingered month after month, supporting himself by obtaining occasional employment as a portrait painter. He appeared to be a poor, friendless, solitary man, but little or nothing was known of his prior history and connexions, for he replied with much reserve and evasion to any question concerning them. Nevertheless, he was liked by the people who had any intercourse with him, for he was, albeit melancholy and eccentric,

unquestionably a gentleman in the true sense of the word, and highly gifted in his profession.

Some little distance to the south of the town there is a spit of land which projects into the sea, forming a sort of natural breakwater in that direction. On the rocky extremity of this promontory, the Barons of Svendborg in olden time built a magnificent castle, now a mass of picturesque ruins, majestic even in decay and desolation; only two or three rooms are yet habitable.

It happened that the steward of the then Baron of Svendborg, when on a visit to the town, heard of the poor stranger artist, and of his remarkable talent as a portrait painter; and being a kind-hearted man, not only employed him to paint his (the worthy steward's) semblance on canvas, but also gave him permission to occupy rent-free the aforesaid habitable rooms of the old castle—an offer which Bertel Rovsing very gratefully accepted. And thus it was that the young man soon became locally known and spoken of as the "The Painter of Svendborg Castle."

One of the rooms in the old castle might be termed especially the studio and home of Bertel Rovsing. It was long, narrow, and lofty, with groined ceiling, and lighted by a mullioned window looking close down on the sea. Internally it was an antique, dreamy place, profusely decorated with many a quaint

and characteristic article. Here were real books—not mere ghosts of volumes like those of to-day—but tomes of mighty size, embodying the life-labours of Thoughtsmen; old rusty swords, which had doubtless performed doughty service in their time; helmets, breastplates, gauntlets, &c., all much defaced and time-worn; gloves, guitars, and tapestries. In one corner of the room stood an antique oak table, carved at the ends, and with twisted legs terminating in feet cunningly chiselled into the semblance of dragon's heads, and on this table reposed the skull of a female, on the polished brow of which was written—"Go, get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, though she paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come at last!"

A great number of cartoons, sketches, and paintings (the latter in every degree of progress, but hardly one of them actually finished), were scattered about the room. All bore the impress of genius of an original and highly-powerful character, and their subjects—with the exception of a few delicious love scenes—were teeming with diablerie and marvellous romance. Not a little daring poetry was evinced in the conception of some of these themes; and however a professional critic might object to the extravagance of their nature, and the many incongruities and minor faults of their execution, he could not honestly withhold his praise

from the bold conception, the dramatic cast of the figures—their striking grouping—their originality and fine effect.

This array furnished no mean index to the mind and tastes of the painter. He was obviously gifted, ardent, metaphysical, and ambitious; versed in the lore, and deeply imbued with the spirit of bygone ages; partial to wild, fantastic subjects, and habituated to blending the real with the ideal—the homely with the exquisite—the prosaic with the intellectual—the fleeting Present with the symbols of the Past.

And the person of the man himself? He was about twenty-five years of age, with noble, strongly-marked features, a fine, although not very high forehead, and big, dark, hazel eyes, wildly blazing in their expression. His hair was coal black; his complexion was very dark, or dusky, yet clear and healthy; and altogether he looked much more like an Italian than a Dane. As to his attire, it was literally of the fashion of the middle, or at least of bygone ages; and yet, see him in his studio, and you would vow that he only dressed in keeping with the surrounding objects.

Not very long after Bertel Rovsing had established himself in the old castle, he was employed to paint the portrait of a certain local magnate, one Herr Hans

Jacob Ström. This worthy burgher was reported to be as rich a man as any in Svendborg—yea, or within a circuit of five Danish miles thereof: and they are equal to some three-and-twenty English. He was owner of farms and homesteads, corn fields and pasturages, cattle and flocks; he kept the largest dry-goods store in the town itself; and he was owner of two brigs and a schooner employed in foreign voyages, and several coasting jœgts. Besides all these sources of wealth he maintained a branch mercantile house at Kiel, in Holstein, under the management of his only son. He had one other child—a daughter—who kept his house at Svendborg, for the old merchant had long been a widower. It was the general opinion of the wise men and sage women of Svendborg, that Hans Jacob Ström loved his daughter Olüfina (for such was the maiden's name) more than any thing else in the world—except money. Indeed, Herr Ström, although in the main a good enough man, was decidedly worldly-minded, and too much devoted to the practice of heaping up riches for his heirs to spend. So everybody said, and what everybody says must be true.

Herr Ström was undoubtedly a great man; and, like other great men, he had the weakness to wish himself yet greater than nature intended. Possibly this latent feeling induced him to order his full-length portrait to be taken on a colossal scale, so that

whereas the living Herr Ström stood exactly five feet five inches in his stockings, he required his sem-blance on canvas to measure seven feet three inches from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, that being just one-third more than his real stature, and to be bulky in proportion. The young painter might have a strong private opinion on the subject, but he was too prudent to object, especially when he found that Herr Ström was willing to pay for his portrait exactly in proportion to the number of square feet and inches of canvas it covered. And so Bertel Rovsing set to work, and in due time produced a most imposing picture of the worshipful Ström in his robes of office (for he happened to be chief magistrate of Svendborg that year); and in order that there might be no present doubt as to identity, and also for the special information of posterity, the name "Hans Jacob Ström," was painted in thick white letters an inch and a-half high at the foot of the portrait by the particular desire of the owner. The precaution was probably unnecessary, for everybody who came to view this *chef-d'œuvre* in the line of portrait painting (and nearly all the people of Svendborg saw it in turn), vowed and protested that it was an amazingly true and striking likeness. So, moreover, thought Hans Jacob himself, and in the pride of his heart he actually paid the artist the sum agreed upon without

more than one or two muttered remarks about the expensiveness of works of art as compared to objects of utility ; for, as he truly observed, this piece of painted canvas cost him the price of a yoke of oxen or a good ship's boat. Taking this prosaic and practical view of the transaction, Herr Ström was assuredly justified in speaking of the portrait as an act of extravagance on his part.

Unfortunately, one act of extravagance very frequently leads to another ; and so it did in the present case. Prompted partly by paternal affection and pride, and partly, it may not unfairly be presumed, by the maiden herself, the rich merchant resolved that his daughter should in turn set for her portrait, and thanks to the good sense of Jomfrue\* herself, it was determined that her person should be represented on canvas, precisely its natural size.

O short-sighted Hans Jacob Ström ! evil was the hour when you weakly came to this decision ! Was there no far-seeing friend to whisper of the possible danger which might result from this portrait-taking affair ? Wise art thou in thy generation, as a money-getting man of business, oh, Hans Jacob Ström, and yet wilt thou in this matter approve thyself a most egregious ninny ! Let graybeard Time decide.

\* Jomfrue—literally “young lady,” but exactly equivalent to our English word “Miss.”

Jomfrue Olüfina Ström was beyond cavil the most charming young lady of one-and-twenty that the whole island of Funen could boast. She was blooming as a rose; sweet as the hawthorn blossom; lovely as the Houris idle poets dream of, meerschaum in hand. In sober prose Olüfina was really a very fine, plump, and handsome young lady; and what was far better, she was an exceedingly amiable, warm-hearted creature. Her father, however sordid in most respects (as doubtless became the magnate of Svendborg), begrudged nothing on her behoof, and therefore she had been expensively educated at Copenhagen, at the deservedly celebrated Pensionnat og Dannelses Institut of Madame Skindely, where she was taught every lady-like accomplishment by first-rate instructors. The fond dream of her father—ah, what fond, foolish dreams do fathers indulge in!—was to wed her to some suitor of rank, for the old merchant proudly knew that he could give her a magnificent dowry, and he fancied that she was worthy, as indeed she was, to become even a countess, if Heaven so willed.

Alas! as the inspired Ayrshire ploughman quaintly tells us—

“The best-laid schemes o’ mice an’ men  
Gang aft a-gley!”

Jomfrue Olüfina duly sat for her portrait; and it

is really surprising what an extraordinary number of long sittings she underwent without a single murmur or expression of weariness.

Olufina was a strong-minded, sensible, prudent Danish girl, it is true; but she was also a genuine daughter of Eve, and possessed a very fair share of sensibility and of capability to conceive a passionate affection for one worthy of her. At the very first sitting she saw that the young painter was no ordinary dauber, but as regarded his profession, a man of genius, who only required time and opportunity to command the world's homage. At the second sitting she felt her bosom throb with a mingled feeling of admiration of the handsome form and intellectual features of the painter, and pity for his hard destiny in having to toil, unaided by friends or fortune, up that steep hill, at the summit of which shines Fame's bright, yet illusive star. At the third sitting she was firmly convinced that Bertel Rovsing was not only a genius, but a modest, amiable, noble-minded young man, and the victim of undeserved poverty and obscurity—in a word, the Football of Fortune. Moreover, her curiosity was mightily piqued concerning his past history, and the mystery which obviously enshrouded the same. At the fourth sitting she felt, not without a blush and an instinctive tremor, a warm friendship for him. Ah! you know the witty

French proverb ?—“*L’Amitie est l’Amour sans ailes !*” Yes, Friendship is love without wings ; but those wings will soon grow and expand, never doubt ! At the fifth sitting the destiny of sweet Olüfina Ström was decided. She fell hopelessly head over ears, many thousand fathoms deep, in love with the Painter of Svendborg Castle.

And he, the unknown stranger, the poor man of genius, did he reciprocate the passion he had thus innocently inspired ? Ay, heart and soul ! How could he sit day after day, for long hours at a spell, all alone with such a woman, gazing at her, analyzing every emotion, every expression of her mobile features, ere he transferred them to canvas ; how was it possible for him to do that, without falling irresistibly and helplessly in love with her ?

The portrait, a superb and faithful one, was at length finished, framed, paid for, and duly admired ; but hardly was this done ere a frightful revelation somehow dawned on the obtuse mind of Hans Jacob Ström. In brief, he became apprized of the almost incredible, the doleful, the astounding, the maddening fact, that his daughter—the light of his eye, the pride of his heart, the one bright jewel of his soul—had fallen in love, and secretly plighted her troth with the Painter of Svendborg Castle. What ! His Olüfina, with whom he could willingly pay down (to

a husband of his own choice) a dowry of two hundred thousand specie-dalers, to clandestinely betroth herself to a beggarly artist! The thought was insupportable.

Herr Ström sternly forbade his daughter, under vague yet dreadful penalties, to ever speak with, or even look at Bertel Rovsing again. And he overwhelmed the young painter himself with the most bitter reproaches and threats, should he dare to even lift his eyes again to behold the young lady whom he had so presumptuously entangled in the meshes of Cupid's net. Finally, Herr Ström bewailed his own infatuation, and cursed the evil hour when he employed the wicked young stranger who had thus broken his household peace; and in the first paroxysm of his rage he condemned the portrait of his daughter to the flames; but on second thoughts only ordered it to the lumber-room; and on third thoughts contented himself with simply turning its face to the wall.

Oh! fathers of pretty maidens! (Danish or British) here is a lesson and a warning for you! Beware of employing handsome young artists to paint portraits of your daughters in an unlimited number of private sittings.

Ah! it is the old, old story, sung and told in every age and every clime! The experience of the gray

world, condensed by gentle Will, as he strolled along reedy Avon's bank, into one wondrously eloquent line :—

“The course of true love never did run smooth.”

The wise men and women of Svendborg well and truly said that Hans Jacob Ström loved his daughter better than any thing else in the world—except money. And equally true was it that she loved her father better than anybody else—except Bertel Rovsing.

Thus it was, that, despite poor Bertel was excommunicated and banned by the irate father, Olüfina clung unto him ; and many a secret, sweet, and precious stolen interview they enjoyed, with no witnesses save the twinkling stars and the chaste discreet moon.

A stone's cast from the ruins of Svendborg Castle, in a small ravine or dale, enclosed on three sides by low craggy rocks, grew a clump or grove of firs and beech trees, and that was the trysting place of the lovers. Well, it came to pass that about a week subsequent to the destruction of the brig-of-war, Falk, off Bornholm, and the escape (unsuspected as yet) of Lars Vonved from that awful explosion, the betrothed pair met at this secluded tryst in the mellow gloaming.

A summer's eve—the moon faintly beaming through the foliage overhead—two lovers holding earnest

whispering converse in the secluded and romantic grove—such is the picture ! And hath not the like been painted a thousand times before ? Yea, and it will a thousand times again. Hearken now to a manly voice, broken and desponding though it be—hearken to the utterance of feelings and emotions which, at this moment, have their reflex in many a breast, all the wide world over.

“ Will nothing weigh with him but mammon ? Will nothing move his soul but the gleam of red gold ? Oh, Olufina ! never before did I so keenly feel what a bitter thing is poverty ! I have toiled for fame, and thought myself sure to win it sooner or later ; but now that wild dream is over ! I can battle no longer—my hope is dead and my heart is sick. I have nothing in the world to look forward to—nothing to cheer me—nothing to call my own—nothing ”——

“ But my love ! ” was the thrilling interruption, from a voice low and sweet as the gentle zephyr which fanned the evening air ; and a white arm glanced in the moonbeams, as it twined around the neck of the young man, contrasting with the clustering black hair, which artist-like he wore long and flung back on his shoulders. “ But my love ! ” she repeated, “ and is my love nothing ? You once told me that, were you possessed of that love alone, you would

think yourself richer than a king, and envy him not his crown and sceptre !”

“ My own Olüfina ! ” tremulously exclaimed the lover, fondly caressing her, and appearing to deem that a sufficient reply. Soon, however, he resumed by ejaculating in a tone of bitter triumph—“ Ay, they cannot rob me of your love, although they may tear you from my arms ! Death ! that thought is distraction to me. Your father curses the artist because he is poor, and will wed you to a very clod of the earth, to sate his unhallowed lust for gold ! ”

“ No, Bertel ! ” promptly responded the maiden, “ No ! ” exclaimed she vehemently, and she drew up her head in womanly dignity, whilst her bright eyes flashed in the mellow gloaming, “ No ! if I am dragged to the altar as a bride to wed the being I loathe, that hour will be my last ! But this,” added she, more calmly, “ will never be. Heaven will interpose or my father will relent.”

“ Never, Olüfina ! I have studied him only too well. He is your father, dearest, and fain would I speak of him with respect and honour ; but too surely do I know that his threats to wed you to that being, whose only merit is that he is very rich, are not idle, but will be fulfilled sooner or later ; unless, as you say, Providence interposes. He has discovered our love, and when last I met him, darkly did he threaten

me if I dared to longer aspire to you. Were he to know of our stolen interviews, I shudder to think in what excesses his rage might find vent."

" You are too desponding, Bertel ; From me even, you might learn courage. I have a woman's faith in the future. I have the fond, proud trust of a woman in the ability of the man she loves to achieve means of securing the happiness of them both. With your gifts, dear Bertel, what may you not aspire to—what may you not perform ? It is true that you are not yet appreciated as you merit ; but have I not read of great painters who were as much neglected at the outset of their career, and who triumphantly passed through ordeals as trying as yours, and won for themselves honours, wealth, and the loftiest renown ? And why should not you ? You can—you must—you shall—you will—for my sake ! "

The young girl touched, with a woman's intuition, the right cord, in thus passionately appealing to the innate pride of genius which she knew pervaded her lover's soul, and she threw in her heart and hand as the crowning stimulant and reward. Bertel Rovsing felt it deeply, and a glow of proud self-reliance illuminated his lineaments, as, with flashing eyes, he cried—

" Ay, Olufina, what others have done I can do ; and, with Heaven's help, so I will ! What would

not your love inspire? God has given me, I feel, high gifts, and I will use them bravely. But, oh, Olüfina! fame may yet be far, very far off for me—and hard, indeed, do I find it to climb even the first step of the mount. That once achieved, the rest were comparatively easy; but you know not, dearest, what a fearful task it is for a poor, unfriended artist to fight his way into notice. I may toil," continued he, gloomily, "for long weary years, and just when my heart is sick with hopes deferred, my spirit broken, my brain benumbed, my hand paralyzed, and my worn-out frame sinking into a premature grave, *then* may the guerdon of genius be accorded me—when the mould smelleth rankly above the rose, and all relish for life is lost, and all aspirations for the honours and gifts men can bestow dead and passed away for ever. And even were fame already mine, unless wealth gilded it, your father would remain inexorable as ever. I see no light through the cloud—not a glint. Heaven help and support me, for I know not what to say nor do!"

"This is cruel, Bertel, foolish and cruel to us both, but to me especially!" exclaimed Olüfina, with tears. "It is true that men call my father selfish and hard-hearted, but he is not the sordid, unfeeling being they think—indeed he is not! I see him in his better moments—they never do! Oh, had my poor

mother lived, her influence with him was all potent, and she would have sacrificed herself for the happiness of her child! But it is wicked to repine—wicked to mistrust the care of Providence. I know not how it is, but I have a strong and subtle presentiment that, ere many days are over, Heaven will bring about something which will prove a crisis to our fate."

"A fatal one, Olüfina?"

"Why, Bertel, will you persist in looking on the darkest side of everything connected with your—*our*—future? Until lately you walked ever on the sunny side of the way; but since my father talked—perhaps not seriously, after all—of wedding me to a wealthy suitor, you have not been the same. You have a noble heart, Bertel, and a lofty mind and brilliant talent—'tis Olüfina, who never flatters, tells you this!—but one thing you lack."

"And that is?"—

"Faith! You lack that perfect reliance on the watchful care and interposition of God's gracious providence, which alone will make you happy, if you deserve it. You lack the first essential to success in your career. Have faith, and already half the battle is won! Have faith, and you must and will ultimately stand a conqueror!"

"Sweet enthusiast! And yet there is something

in your words, Olüfina, that thrills me more than your idea itself. Were you once my wife, for ever mine own wife, to hourly pour such counsel and encouragement into my soul, what is there that I might not attempt and perform—to what dizzy eminence might I not climb? Ah, Olüfina! wert thou”—

“Hush! hark! what is that?” hurriedly whispered the maiden. “O Himlen! we are watched—tracked—discovered!”

And without pausing to utter one word of farewell, or—what was worse—without staying to exchange the customary parting kiss (ah! lovers only know how precious that is!) Olüfina fled swiftly away, like a fawn frightened by the stealthy approach of ruthless hunters.

Bertel Rovsing stood a moment, undecided whether or not to pursue her, for he himself had neither heard nor seen any cause for alarm, and was therefore disposed to chide her for yielding to a groundless maidly panic, by fancying what did not exist. But, now that his senses were aroused, he speedily had reason to be thankful that his mistress possessed keener, or, at any rate, more alert faculties than himself, for he distinctly heard heavy footsteps crashing among the debris of the dale, and hoarse voices in earnest conversation. He comprehended the speakers were approaching him, and he instantly

slipped into a thick covert, and with palpitating heart awaited the result.

More and more near and distinct sounded the voices, and Bertel, noiselessly thrusting aside the foliage, looked forth on a rugged pathway which skirted the clump of trees, and beheld two men slowly advancing—and bulky figures they appeared in the glimmering moonshine. By-and-by he could distinguish their conversation.

"By the Keal of Balder!" growled one speaker, in a deep bass voice, "the more I think of the matter, the more I am convinced that this story thou tellst is no more real than the existence of Ole Luköie!\* It is a lying invention—a trap for the unwary for aught I know!"

"Don't be such an obstinate pigheaded unbeliever, Mads Nielsen!" exclaimed his companion, "I tell thee, man, that I, myself, heard Burgomaster Puglfahrt read it aloud from the Kjobenhavn (Copenhagen) Fodrelandet, and I begged to see the paper and read it with my own eyes."

"That I can easily believe, but it does not follow that I should believe the yarn itself," doggedly retorted the incredulous Mads (Matthew).

"Why not—why shouldst thou doubt it, Mads?"

\* Ole Luköie is a sort of mischievous imp or fairy of immense renown in Denmark.

"O, I know much better than to credit all they put in print now-a-days. Many a thumping lie have I read in the papers. That Fœdrelandet tells as many lies in a twelvemonth as would sink a jolly-boat!"

"Ay," sadly replied his companion, sighing deeply and shaking his head with an air of melancholy conviction, "but this is no lie, depend upon it. Do you think that Fœdrelandet would dare to circumstantially report that a king's ship had been blown up, if it was not true? No, it is only too certain that Captain Vonved was betrayed by some traitor of his crew—the curse of Thor light upon the villain, say I!—and that he was aboard the Falk when she exploded off Bornholm this day week, and every soul on board perished but one man."

"It cannot be! I will *not* believe it possible!" energetically protested Mads Neilsen. "Lars Vonved's crew were all true as steel—they loved him and they feared him—they would not and they dare not betray him!"

"Ay, Mads; but there is a black sheep in every flock—a Judas in every company and crew."

"Hark ye, Hans Petersen!" hoarsely cried Mads, "my own brother, as you know, is one of the crew of the Skildpadde, and if he has betrayed Lars Vonved, I swear," and here he uttered a fearful oath, "that I will drive this dagger up to the hilt through his traitor's

heart! Ay, by the God whomade me, I will slay my mother's own son whenever and wherever I meet him, if he is the man."

"Mads, min ven," said Hans Petersen in a conciliatory tone, "I would stake my own life that be the traitor whom he may, he is not thy brother."

"Be he whom he may, brother or no brother," sullenly muttered the excited Mads, replacing a long glittering dagger he had withdrawn from his bosom, "I swear to wet my blade in the traitor's best heart's blood if ever I come athwart him!"

By this time the two speakers had arrived exactly opposite the hiding-place of Bertel Rovsing, and there they stopped within a few yards' distance, whilst Hans Petersen relighted his pipe. Bertel now perceived that they were two sturdy fellows, whom, by their attire, he knew to be either fishermen, or sailors, or smugglers, and, by their discourse, liegemen to the outlaw Lars Vonved, whose renown was familiar to Bertel as to all other true Danes. Hans Petersen bore on his shoulder a pair of oars, and Mads Nielsen carried in his left hand a coil of rope to which a grapnel was attached, and a boat-hook slanted over his shoulder. Bertel readily conjectured that they were on their way to a boat which he had noticed moored just under the castle walls at the extreme point of the little promontory.

When Hans Petersen's short pipe was all a-glow, he and his comrade silently resumed their walk, and Bertel watched their figures until they ascended the ridge of rocks, and after standing broadly revealed against the eastern sky as they reached the summit, they disappeared on the seaward side.

Then Bertel came cautiously forth from his retreat, and thoughtfully took his way towards his home in the old castle, carefully keeping in the long dark shadow which the ruins of the rock on which they were built projected down the dale, lest, haply, some other "night birds" might be abroad and see him, and set afloat undesirable reports as to the cause of his wandering at untimely hours.

He reached his vaulted studio unmolested and unobserved, and, sooth to say, he forgot for awhile his own absorbing troubles and aspirations, in indulging in romantic speculations concerning the fate of the celebrated Baltic Rover, for he had long felt a deep interest in the popular stories of the character and deeds of Lars Vonved.

## CHAPTER VI.

## WILHELM VINTERDALEN.

ON the day following his broken interview with Olüfina, related in the foregoing chapter, the painter sat moodily in his studio, and bitter were the thoughts that eddied through his brain. A gentle tap at the old iron-studded door aroused him, and he slowly arose to open it. Two rosy little children were there, and they immediately ran past him into the studio. They knew him well—loved him well—for Bertel was one who dearly loved “little children.”

• And so, Bertel Rovsing sat down with his little friends, and permitted them to amuse themselves with his curiosities, and listened to their innocent prattle, and gazed at their happy faces, till his proud unhappy heart melted within him, and burying his face in his hands he burst into tears.

He wept: and yet there was a fierceness in his weakness—a burning fire in his heart—a dark

brooding in his o'er-wrought brain. The affrighted children left him, but he stirred not from his position, Visions of the past, and thoughts of the present, flitted confusedly to and fro ; but as to the future it was all one black blank. He saw no ray of light beaconing him onward—he heard no whisperings of hope.

“ O God ! ” ejaculated he, in a paroxysm of fierce despair “ why hast thou given me genius ? Wedded to poverty it is the curse of curses ! Oh, would that I had been created a being with no more intellect than suffices to earn daily bread by daily sweat of brow ! I should have been happy then ! and what matters it, if such happiness is but a step higher than the state of the brutes that perish ? Better be senseless as a clod than exist in a state like mine. The madman who fancies his straw couch the throne of an emperor, enjoys a species of bliss which I can envy ; the idiot, even, who basks him in the glare of the noon-day sun, knows no pangs when hunger is satisfied. Is it not better to be devoid of intellect, than to possess it as a source of perpetual torture ? Support me ! relieve me ! oh, my God ! or let me die and be at rest ! ”

He started up and paced his studio. The beautiful creations of his genius lying around, seemed to him so many mockeries of his misery. One exquisite little domestic scene, which he had recently

painted, especially enhanced his anguish. It represented a young couple listening to the prattle of their children. He gazed savagely at this offspring of his own vivid imagination, and raising his clenched fist drove it through the eloquent canvas.

“Children!” cried he, gnashing his teeth, “wife—children! No wife for me—no children to clasp my knees and look up in my face, and call me ‘father!’” and he burst into an unnatural sobbing laugh.

That night the painter opened the window of his studio, and looked forth with a haggard smile on his feverish lips. A glorious balmy night it was. Overhead was an unfathomable azure firmament, o'er-canopying sea and land, profusely sprinkled with stars of all magnitudes, and high in their midst, in her own peculiar circle—a broad belt of clear light in which no star trespassed—shone the beauteous full queenly moon, which happening to be then in the centre of the system, was literally its crowning diadem. All things below—the works of the Creator and of the created—were alike bathed in her liquid silvery beams.

The painter gazed at the sleeping horizon, and then his eye slowly lowered until it rested on the sea close below the castle's base. The water was so bright, so placid, so pure. And the moon, and the stars, and

the white fleecy cloudlets, and even the figure of the young man himself as he stretched forward to gaze, were all reflected on the smooth surface so distinctly, and flickered with the tiny ripples so charmingly.

"Ah," groaned the painter, "the waters are calm as death, and were I beneath them I should not feel this burning heart and throbbing brain, but should sleep as I once did on my mother's bosom—sleep, perchance, never more to waken!"

And the longer he looked the deeper grew his desire for oblivion. Where was his good angel then?

By slow and almost imperceptible degrees a bluish haze arose from the sea, and rising upwards, spread over the azure firmament until the stars shone as through a veil. Thicker grew the haze, obscuring the moon so that even her powerful beams could not pierce what was almost a fog. In a brief space of time, however, a current of air set in from the sea, the surf began to beat with a dull boom against the base of the rock, and the fog lightened to a mere haze again, and this haze, in turn, was rapidly dissipated by the increasing force of an easterly wind, which came rushing across the Baltic, and gathered strength and fierceness every league of its course. And now huge dark clouds, in shape jagged and fantastic as the rocks which bound the coast of Norway, arose from every point of the compass, like war-steeds

gathering to the battle-field, and then they were tossed, and whirled, and eddied, and hurled to and fro by the reckless blast.

Anon the clouds were no longer separately distinguishable, but were fused into one black canopy, and distant thunder muttered and rumbled, and broad flickering flashes of lightning uplit the eastern horizon. The sea, driven in long foaming surges towards the lee-shore, leaped ever and anon with a prolonged hollow roar on the shingly beach, and broke with fury against the rocky promontory. The sea-birds flew wildly landward, some uttering hoarse screams, others shrill cries, almost like human beings in distress; and a great horned owl which had long tenanted the ivy-shrouded ruins, roused by the furious elemental warfare and uproar, whooped and shrieked frightfully from its hole just above the oriel window, and was answered by the harsh and dismal croaking of a pair of ancient ravens, its near neighbours.

All this time the painter had stood at the window, his arms folded beneath his breast and resting on the lintel, whilst he stretched forth and watched the rapid gathering of the portentous storm with a species of fierce joy, for it harmonized with the black tempest raging in his own breast; and the fierce storm-wind howled, the angry sea roared, the thunder reverber-

rated, the lightning flashed, the sea-gulls screamed, the owl hooted, the ravens croaked, and the salt-spray, mingled with rain, dashed against the hoary walls of the castle, and flung sharp icy drops in drenching showers on his bare head. Amid all this horrible discord and din, he laughed loudly and desperately, and shook his clenched fist out in the black midnight air, as though defiant of all the powers of the elements.

“Ha! ha! ha!” shouted he in his mad excitement, “is this the eve of the Witches’ Sabbath? Are they flocking hitherward to hold their unhallowed revels? The spirit of storm has awakened from slumber, and unchained the fell ministers of his wrath. I laugh—I rejoice—I fear nought and care nought. Let the sea swell and rage, and dash great ships to fragments against rock and land—let the forked lightning rive and shatter proud towers and spires—let the pitiless hurricanes and seething floods blast the hopes of the husbandman—let the incarnate destroyer ride on the wings of the wind, and career red-handed o'er sea and land—for what care I? What is it all to me?”

“Ay, ye elemental ministers—ye blind instruments of vengeance! strike here! wreak your wrath here, even here! Smite and spare not! Smite this hoary den of dead and forgotten tyrants—shatter its crum-

bling, blood-cemented masonry—rend it from its ivied turrets to its foundations deep in the living rock—hurl it sheer into the foaming sea—grip it, uproot it, crush it, scatter it, until there is not one stone left upon another! Ha, ha, ha!” and he emitted a hideous, almost maniac laugh. “Howl, ye invisible winds! flash, oh subtle lightning! growl, roar, crash, oh hungry sea! Ye may frighten the prosperous, the rich, the good, the happy—those who have homes, households, families—but ye have no terrors for such as me!”

The unhappy young man dashed aside his long dark hair, which wind, and rain, and sea-spray, had matted over his pallid face, and he glared forth as though striving to pierce the very heart of the tempest. He was wrought up to that pitch of despair and excitement, that for the moment reason herself might be said to totter on her shaken throne.

“What am *I*?” shrieked he. “What has my life been that I should cling to it, or value it, or strive to preserve it, or fear to yield it at the first summons of the Angel of Death? From my very childhood my lot has been cruel—full of anguish and misery. Ah! well do I remember how the sun of my young life was clouded—how I suffered even when a pure and sinless child! What inexpiable crime had my father, or my father’s father, committed, that his sin should

be visited *thus* on his child, on child's child? From youth upwards I have had no family—no home—no father, mother, sister, brother! My life is an enigma—my history is an impenetrable mystery even unto myself—dark is all the past, yet darker the dread future. I only know how I have struggled—how I have striven and suffered. I will strive no longer. There is a fearful, an inexplicable, ay, and it seems an inexpiable, unappeasable curse upon me. Let my dread Destiny be fulfilled—I bow and yield to it, now and for evermore!"

He tossed both arms wildly upwards, as though beckoning the invisible ministers of vengeance to complete their task by his annihilation.

His terrible emotion had reached its acme, and neither brain nor body could sustain more. A sudden and complete reaction ensued, and uttering a faint, bubbling cry, he slowly fell backward from the rattling open casement, and sank in a heap on the floor. For some minutes he remained half insensible, and then with a great effort he slowly and painfully arose to his feet, secured the window, and groping to his humble pallet, he cast himself on it with a lamentable ejaculation.

For hours he remained in a state of semi-stupor, sullenly listening to the wild howlings of the tempest, which smote the crazy old castle until ever

and anon it rocked to and fro, like a ship at sea, and threatened to bodily topple over, even as Bertel had so madly invoked. Occasionally, however, he uttered heart-rending moans and cries, and in the depth of his agony and self-abasement passionately appealed unto his Maker for mercy and aid. At length physical prostration and exhaustion triumphed, and he sank into a profound dreamless sleep.

Long had he been thus happily insensible to his woes and sorrows, when by degrees he became partially awake, and turned over, and tossed his limbs with a feverish action which abundantly evinced the disordered state of his mind and body.

Hark! was that a real sound—a real voice? Or, did he only hear them in a half-waking dream? He struggled—struck his head sharply against the old carved wainseating at the head of his bed—and with a start and a long painful shiver, at length he was fairly awake.

Bertel Rovsing now sat up in a bewildered surprise at finding himself fully dressed; and glancing at his breast and shoulders he perceived they were yet stiff and damp from exposure to the tempest. He quickly recollect ed all that had happened—all his mad agony—and he groaned to think that he had only awaked to undergo another day of anguish and misery, for of late he was wont to go to his bed and pray that

morning would quickly dawn, and when morning came, he prayed for night. One hasty glance at the oriel-window informed him that the tempest was past and gone, like a tale that is told, and that the morning was cloudless and serene. A vivid stream of sunshine entered obliquely, and illuminated the huge face of a quaint old German clock fixed against the opposite wall. Bertel saw that it was on the stroke of ten.

“Er den saa mange?” (Is it so late?) muttered he. And then, with a bitter ironical smile, he added,

“How thankful I ought to be for having passed so many hours in blessed oblivion! Ha! I would that a tempest raged every night, and then I should be spared many—ah, how many!—hours of wakeful agony! Why, oh why, is not the fabled water of Lethe a blissful reality? Ah, if it only flowed on this Island of Funen, I know one poor weary heart-broken pilgrim who would crawl on his hands and knees, if needful, to quaff deep insatiate draughts of its blessed waters! Oblivion! ah, yes! Oblivion would be bliss unto a wretch like me, whose life is a torment.”

As he uttered this, he once more broke out in a wild mocking laugh, and then sank listlessly back on his couch.

At this moment the old iron-bound door of the

outer room echoed divers impatient kicks and thumps, applied to its exterior.

"Ha!" cried Bertel Rovsing, raising his head in languid surprise, "I did not altogether dream, then? Somebody is at the door? Who can it be? What do they want with the poor recluse?"

He was not long left in suspense, for the kicking and thumping suddenly ceased, and a clear shrill young voice (evidently proceeding from lips closely applied to the huge key-hole) distinctly projected these imperative words into the heart of the vaulted room,

"Luk Dören op! Herr Rovsing, luk Dören op!"  
(Open the door, Mr. Rovsing, open the door).

"Why, 'tis little Wilhelm Vinterdalen," muttered the painter to himself, at once recognising the familiar voice.

Then he cried aloud,

"Vent lidt, min lille Ven! Jeg staaer strax op!"  
(Wait awhile, my little friend, I am going to get up directly).

"Det er mulight!" (That may be) screamed the unseen visitor, "med de har sovet far længe! Klokken er ti!" (but you have slept too long. 'Tis ten o'clock).

Bertel Rovsing, at these words, overcame his

inertia, and at one vigorous bound sprang off the bed on to his feet.

"Verily," muttered he, with a cynical laugh, "the child speaks well, and I richly deserve his innocent reproach. Babes and sucklings are wise."

He went to the door, and with some exertion of strength withdrew its heavy rusted bolts.

Lo! at the threshold stood a sturdy, beautiful, rosy-cheeked, bright-looking, bold-eyed, well-dressed boy, of some four, or at most five, years, panting with his exertions to rouse the sleepy Painter of Svendborg Castle. At his feet was a good-sized basket, covered with a snow-white napkin, and without saying a word, he gave an arch look at Bertel, and snatching up his basket, ran with it into the studio.

The painter slowly and thoughtfully followed him.

Setting down the basket, the child smiled at Bertel, and without the slightest embarrassment doffed his velvet hat, decorated with two long feathers from the wings of a sea-eagle, and made a graceful little bow, like a well-bred gentleman's son, saying,

"God Morgen, Herr Rovsing!"

"Gqd Morgen," (Good morning) "Wilhelm Vinterdalén!" responded the painter, laying his hand with a kind, even fond, expression, on the child's head.

A brief pause; and then—

"That is a large basket. You did not carry it here yourself?"

"O yes, Herr Rovsing, I did."

"What, all the way from your mother's house?" and he stooped and passing his forefinger underneath the handle, uplifted it, as though to judge of its weight.

"Yes, all the way!" repeated Wilhelm, proudly.

"Ah, what a strong little fellow you must be!" said the painter, gazing admiringly, and with the critical eye of an artist, at the child, who indeed looked an infant Hercules, being not only finely proportioned, but gifted with a body and limbs wonderfully developed for his age.

"What a noble boy!" murmured the poor painter to himself, as he caressed Wilhelm's flaxen head (around which the golden beams of the morning sun shed an halo), and gazed fixedly at his clear sparkling blue eyes and intelligent countenance, all a-flush with health and innocent joy.

"You don't know what is in the basket?" interrogated the child, archly nodding his head as he slowly uttered each word with a clear ringing intonation.

"No, indeed, I do not."

"Can't guess?"

"No, dear Wilhelm."

"Ah, 'tis for you though."

"Indeed! For me?"

"Yes! all for you. My mother sends it."

"Good mother!—dear kind friend!" ejaculated the painter, in a smothered voice.

"See, Herr Rovsing! look here!" and Wilhelm drew away the napkin, and displayed the contents of the basket, a glowing pile of ripe, luscious fruits—peaches, grapes, nectarines, early summer apples and pears, and a china basinfull of the small yet peculiarly delicious indigenous Danish strawberries.

"Mother and I gathered them all for you this morning! I climbed the vine and plucked these!" and he pointed to some magnificent clusters of hot-house grapes.

"And you were pleased to bring them to me?" —

The painter drew his breath very hard, and grew deadly pale as he asked the question.

"O yes, dear Herr Rovsing!" answered the ingenuous boy, "for I love you very much!"

A gasp—a gurgle—a short quick cry—an unintelligible ejaculation—burst from the quivering white lips of Bertel Rovsing; and he snatched the child to his breast, and passionately kissed him.

"God in Heaven bless you, my darling!" was all he could exclaim, in a broken voice.

The child seemed surprised, yet not afraid, at this

uncontrollable burst of emotion, but he was much too young to comprehend it.

“And you are to come back with me, and to stay all day!” said Wilhelm, when the painter released him from the close embrace, and set him on the floor.

“To your mother’s?”

“Yes, Herr Rovsing—read that!”

The child drew a note from his bosom and gave it to the painter, who with a trembling hand opened it, and read as follows:—

“Dear Herr Rovsing!

“My little boy will bring you this, and also a basket of our fruits, which he and I have gathered, with much pleasure, this morning for you. And I shall be very glad if you will accompany him home, for I have received intelligence that his father will shortly arrive from a foreign voyage, but, alas! only to stay a very short time with us; and I wish very much to have a miniature of our little Wilhelm, for my dear husband to take away with him, as I know it will gratify him exceedingly.

“Your friend,

“AMALIA VINTERDALEN.”

Tears gushed into the painter’s eyes, as he read this, and his haggard countenance betrayed the strong emotions of his soul.

“Go, and play in the studio, my dear Wilhelm!”

said he, struggling hard to speak articulately. "I will get ready to go home with you."

The child bounded with a merry laugh to gaze at the familiar pictures, whilst the painter hurriedly took up the basket and passed into a small private closet.

The instant he was alone he cast himself on his knees and burst into tears.

"O, my God!" sobbed he, "pardon me my vile ingratitude—my awful wickedness! Last night I felt so miserable, so utterly friendless, forsaken, and hopeless—so filled with despair that I was almost tempted to rush unbidden into Thy presence! Forgive me, dear and gracious God!"

He covered his face with his tremulous hands and rocked to and fro, uttering a monotonous wail. By degrees the flood-tide of his emotion subsided, and, although he still wept, and sobbed, and wailed, he was enabled to subdue his mental anguish and to recover his composure.

"Ah," said he, as he arose from his knees, "how deeply is ingratitude to God and to my fellow-beings engrafted in this wretched heart of mine! See how God provides relief for me in my uttermost need. 'Sorrow and weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' The noble mother of this child is a friend indeed. She sympathizes with me—she understands me—she is ever benefiting me

in a way that even my proud sensitive heart cannot resist. God bless her ! Ay, God bless her and her's now and for evermore!"

In a short time the painter came forth from the closet, prepared to accompany his little friend home. The throbings of his proud unhappy heart were now temporarily stilled—his mind was more at ease and resigned: a grateful calm had come over his soul.

Hearing a strange noise in his studio, the door of which was closed, he hastily pushed it open, being apprehensive that the child might be doing injury to his paintings. He stopped on the threshold, however, arrested by a singular spectacle. Wilhelm had made a selection from the old armour and weapons scattered about the studio, and had clapt a helmet on his head, suspended a pair of huge old holster pistols to his waist, and held a long Italian rapier in his hand. Thus armed, he was marching at full stride up and down the room, talking and shouting, and making furious lunges at imaginary foes.

"What!" exclaimed the amused spectator, smiling at the boy's warlike humour; "is my little Wilhelm playing the soldier—fancying himself den tappre Landsoldat?" (the brave soldier-lad.)

"No!" promptly answered Wilhelm, flourishing the rapier with surprising ease and dexterity.

"Not a soldier? Who are you like then, now that you wear a helmet and sword and pistols?"

"Like a sea-rover—a corsair!" responded the child, standing still a moment to push back the heavy bronze helmet, which had fallen down over his eyes.

"A corsair! what a fancy! Would you not rather be a soldier?"

"No, no, no!" pettishly cried the boy, "I will not be a soldier! I will be a rover, like Captain Vonved!"

Bertel Rovsing was much surprised at this speech, albeit it was uttered by a mere child.

"Who told you about Captain Vonved?" questioned he.

"Mads Neilsen!" was the unhesitating reply.

"Mads Neilsen!" repeated the painter to himself, "surely I have heard the name lately, in actual connexion with that same Lars Vonved." And a moment's reflection enabled him to remember that one of the two men whose conversation he had overheard in the ravine, when he and Oliufna held their last interrupted tryst, was addressed by his companion as Mads Neilsen, and said quite enough to prove himself an enthusiastic and devoted friend, if not follower, of the celebrated rover, Vonved.

"Wilhølm, do you know Mads Neilsen?"

"O yes; I know him."

"And he has talked to you about Captain Vonved?"

"Yes; and he sometimes gives me a ride in his boat, and he brings us fish—O such beautiful fish!"

"Ah, then he is a fisherman?"

"Yes; and he lives on the island."

"The island? What island, Wilhelm?"

"One there," and the child pointed towards the entrance to Svendborg Bay.

"But there are two islands there—Thorö and Taasinge—do you know which he lives upon?"

"No; but he lives in a little wooden house close to the sea. I have been in it ever so many times."

"Indeed! and did Madame Vinterdalén—did your dear mother know that Mads Nielsen took you across the water to his house?"

"O yes, Herr Rovsing."

"And does Mads Nielsen sometimes call at your house?"

"Yes; he came yesterday."

The boy—not yet five years of age—evinced by his replies, and the language in which they were couched, an intelligence very far beyond his years. His body and mind were alike marvellously precocious.

Bertel Rovsing's curiosity was somewhat excited, for he now felt certain that Mads Nielsen, who, as he

knew positively, was, in some way, intimately connected with Lars Vonved, must be the same man who, it appeared, had, in the plentitude of his own admiration of the redoubted rover, actually inspired a kindred feeling in the breast of little Wilhelm Vinterdalen.

"Come, Wilhelm," said he, after a thoughtful pause, "you must put off your helmet and lay down your sword, for it is time to go."

The boy complied with evident reluctance, and divested himself of helmet and pistols with exceeding deliberation. He still held the rapier clutched in both hands, when, suddenly looking the painter full in the face, he gave a fierce stamp with his right foot, and exclaimed, in a loud, shrill tone, expressive of firm determination—

"Herr Rovsing, when I grow to be a man I *will* be a rover like Captain Vonved!"

The painter gazed in astonishment at the animated features, proud attitude, and energetic gestures of the child.

"My dear Wilhelm," said he, very gravely, "do not talk in that manner. You are a little boy, and cannot understand what you are saying; but it nevertheless pains me to hear you. If I thought you would ever be likely to become a corsair, I would pray unto God to take you to himself now you are

an innocent child. Captain Vonved is a corsair, and corsairs are wicked desperate men. You would not wish to be wicked when you are a man, Wilhelm?"

"No. But Captain Vonved is *not* wicked. He is a gallant nobleman!" eagerly cried Wilhelm.

"Who says so?"

"Mads Nielsen!"

"Ha!" muttered the painter almost angrily, "I shall make some enquiry about this Mads Nielsen. A precious scoundrel, to impart such ideas to a child!"

He gently took away the rapier from the boy, smoothed his beautiful flaxen hair and kissed his rosy cheek.

The elegant velvet hat, with its plume of sea-eagle's feathers, was then substituted for the rusty old helmet, and Wilhelm snatching up the empty basket, once more burst into his merry child's laugh and ran out into the open air.

The painter followed with a portfolio under his arm, and the twain wended their way towards the house of Madame Vinterdalen. Little Wilhelm seemed to have already forgotten all about corsairs and Captain Vonved and Mads Nielsen, for he chattered and laughed and gambolled in the fresh crisp breeze and golden sunshine.

Bertel Rovsing listened to his innocent prattle, and

gazed at him with a mingled look of admiration and affection.

“What a noble, what a glorious little fellow!” ejaculated he. “Ah! to be the father of such a boy —what joy, what pride, what happiness!”

He sighed deeply, and unbidden tears blinded his vision.

Had Olüfina heard his words and witnessed his emotion, would not her heart have leapt in subtle sympathy.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE TRAITOR'S DOOM.

As the precise character and pursuits of Lars Vonved and his followers will be duly revealed in the course of this narrative, it will not be necessary to enter into any details concerning them at present; but a brief explanation may be given of the circumstances under which Lars Vonved became a prisoner at Bornholm.

It must be premised that the formidable Baltic Rover possessed two vessels, the small one being the beautiful Little Amalia, described in a preceding chapter; the other was a vessel of considerable size, called the Skildpadde. The Little Amalia, in fact, served as a tender to the Skildpadde, and was to her what the jackal is to the lion, or the pilot-fish to the shark.

Both vessels had been hovering several days off the island of Bornholm, for reasons best known, and

perhaps only known to the Rover himself. Some information received by the medium of a fishing-boat, induced Vonved one evening to stand close inshore in the Skildpadde, having first ordered the Amalia to cruise at sea for a week in a certain latitude. Vonved then landed from the Skildpadde at a snug cove on the coast about two miles from the town of Ronne, and directed the crew of his boat to remain there to await his return. He was absent until day-break on the following morning, and then came down to the cove, and ordered the boat back to the Skildpadde, telling the men that he himself would remain alone on the island for ten days. During this interval the Skildpadde was to cruise out of sight of the shore, and to close in with the land on the evening of the tenth day, and then to send a boat to the cove to bring off the captain. Such, at least, were the oral orders of Vonved; but he also handed a sealed letter to the coxswain of the boat, addressed to his chief officer aboard the Skildpadde. Having thus sent back the boat, Vonved walked off in the direction of Ronne.

So far, nothing was unusual in the wild, adventurous career of the Rover. But he little suspected that during his absence from the boat one of his men, who for some months past had secretly engaged for a heavy reward to betray at the first opportunity his

captain to the Danish authorities, had stolen from this cove when most of his comrades were sleeping in the dead of the night, and only the coxswain was partially awake, nodding in the stern-sheets of the boat. This perfidious traitor had then gone straight to Ronne, and given information that Lars Vonved had landed, and as he had reason, he said, to believe (as indeed he had, for he overheard a conversation between Vonved and his chief officer), the Rover intended to lurk in the immediate neighbourhood some days. He named a place where he supposed Vonved would be on the morrow; and having received 150 specie-dalers as part payment for his villainy, and a pledge that he should receive 500 more in case Vonved was captured on the occasion, he hurried back to the boat, and in due time reached the Skildpadde, quite unsuspected.

The result of this treachery was the capture of Lars Vonved, and his removal next day on board the Falk brig-of-war, which had just anchored in the roads. The subsequent explosion of that vessel, however, was purely accidental. At any rate, Vonved was quite guiltless of wilfully blowing her up, as hinted in the account published in *Fædrelandet*. He was hurled to a great distance by the explosion, stunned, but uninjured in person. He quickly rallied, and lashed himself to a spar, which drifted

out to sea with the ebb tide and wind, and from this horrible jeopardy he was rescued by the British barque Camperdown. The rest of his adventure, up to the time when his little *jøegt* sailed away from the Camperdown, is already known.

When Vonved was seized on shore in the manner described in the Copenhagen paper, he instantly knew that one of his crew must have betrayed him. He entreated the commanding officer of the troops stationed at Ronne, who had effected his capture, to reveal to him the name of the traitor. The officer, thinking that Vonved would never have any opportunity of avenging himself on the ruffian, and that consequently no harm could result from gratifying his natural curiosity on this point, complied after a brief hesitation. He also told Vonved the particulars of the man's treachery, the payment he had already received, and the sum he was further to receive, now that Vonved was actually captured through his instrumentality. The result of the knowledge thus acquired by Vonved will now be detailed.

The morning after Lars Vonved had been received by the Amalia from the Camperdown, the little *jøegt*, having sailed all night at her utmost speed, hove-to at daybreak, and Vonved himself ascended to the masthead, and with a powerful telescope swept the horizon. He beheld at a great distance two or three

vessels, but not the one he looked for. The *Amalia* was now in that part of the Baltic, where the *Skildpadde* had orders to cruise, and the latter vessel was the one which the Rover sought. For several hours the *joëgt* then ran on different tacks, to and fro, like a sharp-nosed hound scenting its master, and at length the wished-for vessel was descried. With every stitch of her black-dyed duck extended to the fresh morning breeze, the Little *Amalia* bore straight down on the *Skildpadde*, the latter meanwhile jogging along under easy sail. A sharp lookout was, however, kept on board of her, for when the *Amalia* was yet several miles distant, the *Skildpadde* recognised her, and hoisted a private signal. It was immediately responded to, and then the *Skildpadde* hove-to, and the swift little *joëgt* of course neared her very rapidly.

If the reader happens to be acquainted with the Danish language he will, doubtless, have already marvelled that such a singular name as *Skildpadde* distinguished the chief vessel of the Baltic Rover. *Skildpadde* means, in English, literally, Tortoise; and the tortoise is one of the slowest of four-footed creatures. It does not run; it does not leap; it does not even walk, under ordinary circumstances: it only creeps and crawls, much in the fashion of a sloth or a toad. Why, then, was this vessel called "Tortoise?"

Simply for a whim of Lars Vonved, who so christened her in a spirit of bitter irony, because she was, in fact, probably, the very swiftest vessel then afloat in any sea or ocean throughout the world.

The former history of the Skildpadde was sufficiently romantic even for a Rover's ship. She was built at Bombay, entirely of teak-wood—the hardest and most durable of all woods used in shipbuilding—by Parsees, a peculiar people, of quite a different race from the Hindoos, and said to be descendants of the ancient Fire-worshippers of Persia. These Parsees are, at any rate, exceedingly intelligent and able workmen, and during the last fifty or sixty years have been deservedly celebrated for their skill as ship-builders. They build vessels of all sizes; and some of the finest Indiamen afloat have been entirely constructed by them. The vessel in question was built by the Parsees for an opium clipper; *i.e.*, to be solely employed in the lucrative, but demoralising trade of smuggling opium from the Indian peninsula into China—a traffic which the Chinese government, very naturally, and from praiseworthy motives, endeavoured to suppress; but England went to war with the flowery Celestials in consequence, and individuals yet exist who implicitly affirm that this “Chinese war” was commenced, continued, and concluded for motives which do not by any means reflect the highest

honour on the statesmen who at that period steered the British ship of State. Be it as it may, poor John Chinaman was soundly drubbed and made to pay the prime cost of the rods employed in his flagellation. The opium trade is now more prosperous than ever, for the East India Company, it is said, clear some three millions sterling per annum from the importation of the pernicious drug into China.

The opium clipper in question was originally brig-rigged, and named Cheringhee-Julmahaha. Her career in that service was very brief, however, for on her second voyage, the Malays, who formed two-thirds of her crew, mutinied and murdered their officers and all the other Europeans on board. As a matter of course, they then turned pirates—a gentleman-like profession for which their native habits and predilections admirably qualified them. Ere long, being hotly pursued by one of the East India Company's armed steamers, they steered through the Straits of Malacca, and with the avenger of blood at their heels, they held their frightened course straight across the Indian Ocean, westward. The swift brig soon outsailed the Company's cruiser, but her guilty crew dared not again point her prow towards the Indian Archipelago. Their provisions, and worse still, their water, fell short; and so dreadfully did they suffer, that day by day their numbers were rapidly thinned.

At length they made the coast of Africa, and cast anchor off Zanzibar, only seven of them surviving out of twenty-five. These wretches had no sooner anchored than they rowed ashore in a boat, half famished, and wholly desperate. The slave dealers at Zanzibar at once comprehended the true history of their arrival, and without ceremony clapped the seven Malays in a calabozza, or gaol, and seized the Chering-hee-Julmahaha, under pretence that they would forthwith return her to her owners in India. In a single week they altered her from a brig into a very rakish little barque, and thoroughly equipped her for the slave trade. Furnished with false papers, and rechristened by the innocent name of Santa-Vincente-de-la-Luana, they then dispatched her, under the Spanish flag, with a cargo of 579 negroes, for the Havana, or at least for any part of the coast of Cuba contiguous to that city.

The good and honest barque Santa-Vincente-de-la-Luana was for some time an extremely industrious, hard-worked, and remarkably successful slaver—thanks to her unparalleled swiftness—until the human material for cargo growing scarce on the Mozambique coast, her owners, in an evil hour for them, ventured to send her round by the Cape of Good Hope, to pick up a cargo on the west coast. She did pick up a full cargo very speedily, to the north of

Cape Verde, on the coast of Senegambia, but she herself was “picked up” in turn, being overtaken by a dense fog not a hundred miles on her voyage; and when it cleared off, His Britannic Majesty, George the Fourth’s cruiser Firefly was discovered within a cable’s length, and the doomed Santa-Vincente-de-la-Luana forthwith became the said Firefly’s prize, much to the joy of 150 jolly British tars, for there were no less than 633 negroes on board the barque, for each of whom the captors would receive a bonus of £5 sterling, besides whatever sum the vessel herself might realize.

And so a grey-haired master’s-mate, and a little round-faced mischievous reefer of fourteen, and a gruff old quartermaster, and ten stalwart beef-eating blue-jackets, were put on board the barque as a prize crew, and they safely navigated her to Sierra Leone—only 111 negroes dying on the passage, owing partly to an insufficiency of food, and partly to a grievous distemper which broke out in consequence of their overcrowded state. At Sierra Leone the “mixed court,” as it was called, speedily condemned Santa-Vincente-de-la-Luana as a true and lawful prize to His Britannic Majesty’s cruizer Firefly, and according to the law in that case made and provided, the beautiful clipper was beached in the sandy bay, hove down, and sown—literally sown—in twain, amidships.

This was done according to custom, the ostensible reason being to render her, and vessels of like character, *bona fide* wrecks, unfit ever again to sail the salt seas as slavers. But, in point of fact, this sort of precaution was illusory and deceptive. It was a very easy matter to put the severed portions together and render the vessel more seaworthy than ever, and well did the slave-dealers understand the dodge. Nothing was more common than for these worthy and wide-awake gentlemen to purchase a condemned slaver (perchance one lately their own), sawn in twain, for comparatively a trifle, and then they had her quietly put together again (lengthened to increase her speed, if they so pleased), and speedily sent her forth to resume her former trade.

Thus it came to pass, that Santa-Vicente-de-la-Luana, duly sawn asunder, a little forward of her mainmast was lawfully put up to public auction. It so happened that two unknown strangers were present on this occasion. One of them was no other than Lars Vonved, the Dane; and his companion was Marmaduke Dunraven, formerly a lieutenant in the English navy, and whom the reader will hereafter recognise as Lars Vonved's chief officer. These strangers carefully examined the condemned slaver, and agreeing that she was precisely the vessel they required for a particular service, and as they had a

tolerably heavy bag of gold, they vowed, in choice Dansk and pure Saxon, to buy her at any cost. She was knocked down to them, with all her "stores, rigging, and apparel" (to quote the legal document), for the small sum of £295 sterling—not the tenth of her real value—and they would have obtained her for one half that sum but for the opposition of two or three pertinacious bidders, who were well known to be agents for the owners of barracoons, or "slave-pens," on the coast.

Hence it was that this beautiful yet wicked craft, first the Cheringhee-Julmahaha, an opium clipper; next a Malay pirate; and then the barque Santa-Vincente-de-la-Luana, a slaver, finally became (*what*, will duly be revealed) the legal property of Captain Lars Vonved.

As already mentioned, Lars Vonved, having a certain caustic satirical spirit of his own, solemnly re-christened her the Skildpadde, or Tortoise. He effected a further transformation much more important. Originally a brig, and converted into a barque by the slavers, Vonved fancied, and fancied very shrewdly, that neither a brig's nor a barque's was the proper rig for the clipper. He resolved to do ample justice to her ingenious Parsee builders, by rigging her in a fashion that would drive her through the water at her utmost possible speed. And so he converted

her into what is technically called a “three-masted schooner”—a very peculiar rig, now comparatively common, especially in the case of foreign trading screw-steamers, but rare indeed at the period in question.

A three-masted schooner, therefore, was the Skildpadde henceforth, and in this guise her keel was one of the fleetest that ever clave the transparent waters of the Baltic; or the blue waters of the main ocean. Her tonnage was somewhat less than 270, per English measurement, and her draught of water was astonishingly small—a distinguishing quality of which Lars Vonved well knew the value, since it had repeatedly enabled him to laugh to scorn the Danish Royal cruisers; for the Skildpadde could safely pass over shoals, or run along a shallow coast, whither her pursuers dared not follow. The very light draught of the Skildpadde—which did not exceed six and a-half feet, with all her stores on board—was attributable to three causes: her great length, her breadth of beam, and the flatness of her bottom. But her “runs” both fore and aft, were sharp as a razor, to use the appropriate nautical phraseology.

Lars Vonved’s originality of fancy was not confined merely to the name and rig of his vessel. He painted her hull entirely black, her bulwarks, her boats, her masts, spars, and yards, were also black as

the raven's wing ; and to crown all, even her sails were of the same ominous hue. It required little strength of imagination to compare the gloom which these black sails of the Skildpadde cast on the sunny surface of the summer sea, to the shadow of guilt, and crime, and sin. But the truth was, Vonved was much too practical a man to do all this from mere eccentricity. By painting hull, spars, and sails, black, he derived an immense advantage over any vessel in chase. He could see his pursuer when his own vessel was invisible, for no glint of sunlight was ever reflected from the sombre-hued Skildpadde.

The crew of the Skildpadde comprised in all fifty-seven men, including the officers. Her tender, the Little Amalia, had a skipper, and four men for crew. In all, therefore, Vonved's immediate followers numbered sixty-two. Herr Lundt, the skipper of the little *joegt*, was not only the youngest officer, but also the youngest man in either vessel. Many of the men were middle aged ; a few were prime old sea-dogs of fifty and upwards ; and, probably, the average age of each man was at least thirty-five. The astute Rover preferred men of experience and tried ability and intelligence, nor did he ever admit one to join his desperate service aboard his two vessels, until after a probation as one of his numerous secret agents, or indirect followers. He thus had selected, by slow degrees,

his present crew of stern, fearless, determined outlaws; skilful as seamen, thoroughly devoted to his fortunes, and of tried fidelity. Yet, notwithstanding all his caution, foresight, and shrewd penetration of character, he had, at this time one man of his crew who had deliberately betrayed him for the sake of what was literally blöd-penge—blood-money.

To resume the narrative.

As the Amalia neared the Skildpadde, Vonved took Herr Lundt aside.

“My friend,” whispered he, “I do not wish the men of the *jøgt* to communicate to the crew of the Skildpadde the manner in which I came aboard—that is, not until I have previously seen and spoken in private with my officers. *Forstaaer de mig?*” (You comprehend me?)

“Perfectly, Captain Vonved!” and the young man bowed with a grave air.

“I am tolerably certain,” continued Vonved, “that our friends yonder cannot have heard from any passing craft of my betrayal at Ronne, and of the fate of the *Falk*; but I wish to ascertain that before I relate the affair to all hands. Heave-to the *jøgt* at a cable’s length, and I will go on board the Skildpadde in the pram.”

“Alone, Captain Vonved?”

“Alone.”

The young skipper immediately gave orders to lower the pram from the davits, and meanwhile the Little Amalia luffed up. In a very few minutes Vonved calmly stept into the pram, and quietly rowed himself to the Skildpadde. He was welcomed on board by a cordial cheer from all hands, for his crew were devoted to his service, and personally were very much attached to him—with one dark exception. They were, however, exceedingly astonished at his unexpected presence, for they had, of course, supposed him to be ashore at Bornholm.

Lars Vonved courteously shook hands with his officers, and uttered a few kind words expressive of his satisfaction at rejoining his faithful crew much sooner than he and they had anticipated; and then he quitted the upper deck, making a sign to his chief officer to accompany him. They passed through the officers' mess-room, and the main cabin, and entered the captain's private cabin at the extreme stern of the vessel.

Closing the door, and cautiously satisfying himself that they were alone, Vonved turned round, and again grasped his officer warmly by the hand, exclaiming with an emotion he did not care to conceal :—

“Dunraven! yesterday at this hour I never thought to see you more!”

"What do you mean! Captain Vonved, what has happened?"

"You have heard nothing, then, of my adventures since we parted?"

"How could I? The boat brought me your written order to cruise hereabouts for ten days, and I immediately obeyed."

"The boat! ah, yes, the boat from which I landed at the cove, near Ronne?"

"Certainly."

"And," continued Vonved, in a quick, significant tone; "did all that boat's crew return with her?"

"Yes, Captain Vonved."

"Every man."

"Undoubtedly."

A singular smile played around the lips of the Rover, and he gently toyed with the little gold ring in his right ear, turning it round and round in the lobe, whilst his eyes gleamed in a very peculiar manner as they met the anxious searching gaze of his lieutenant and devoted friend.

In person, Lieutenant Dunraven contrasted strikingly by the side of the colossal framed Rover. He was taller than Vonved, but was spare and wiry, although capable of great muscular exertion. His complexion was very dark, his features were somewhat irregular, and strongly marked, albeit on the whole rather

handsome and prepossessing, and his eyes were dark and keen. The general expression of his countenance, when in a state of repose, was dreamy and melancholy, as though his thoughts were habitually more of the inexorable past than of the present, or the unknown future. His age was somewhat less than thirty, but he appeared ten years older. By birth he was an Englishman, and the few facts of his early history known to the Rover's crew—who, it may be here mentioned, were all natives of Scandinavia, three-fourths of them being Danes—were, that he had been an officer in the English navy, and attained the rank of lieutenant, but for some act of insubordination was tried by a court-martial and dismissed the service. This happened on the Pacific station, and Dunraven was then only in his twenty-second year. Shortly afterwards he became acquainted with Lars Vonved, at Valparaiso, and the warm friendship which commenced between them, resulted in Dunraven linking his future fortunes to the desperate service of the man who subsequently became so renowned as the Baltic Rover—whether properly or justly so designated, future chapters of this narrative will furnish materials for judging.

In a few energetic sentences Vonved related to Dunraven all that had occurred to him—his betrayal and his marvellous escape. He then gave several

precise orders, and Dunraven quitted the cabin to execute them, Vonved himself remaining below.

On emerging on deck, Dunraven first hailed the little *joegt*, and, in obedience to his command, the skipper ran her close alongside the *Skildpadde*, and secured her to the mizen chains to leeward, in such a manner that the two vessels gently drifted in company without chafing each other. Then Herr Lundt and the four men composing the crew of the Little *Amalia*, were summoned on board the larger vessel. Some minor orders being issued and promptly executed, all hands were called. This was done in a peculiar manner. From a light iron frame over the fore-hatchway leading to the quarters of the crew, a large Chinese gong was permanently suspended. One stroke on this gong indicated the ordinary change of a watch; two strokes summoned one-half of the watch below, on any emergency; and three strokes peremptorily called all hands. "Bells" were not struck on board at any time. The boatswain proceeded to the hatchway, and taking an instrument resembling a drumstick (except that its bulb was of a flat oval shape, instead of being round), which always hung by a loop from the frame ready for use, he struck with it three measured blows. The deep thundering boom of the gong reverberated to the farthest cranny of the vessel, but the last lingering vibration had al-

most died away ere one man, and one only, answered the call, by emerging slowly and reluctantly from the hatchway. All his shipmates were already above deck.

Lieutenant Dunraven now ordered all hands aft to the quarter-deck, across which he drew them up in a double line, the officers standing apart close to the binnacle. He then touched his cap to the little group of officers, and again descended to the cabin, having exchanged, in passing, a significant look with Herr Lundt, for Vonved had told him that he had confided to that young officer the story of his betrayal.

With the exception of Dunraven and Lundt, the crew had not yet the slightest idea of what had occurred, and the men exchanged looks of curiosity and wonder concerning the reason of the general summons aft, and to what it would tend, for they all had an impression that something extraordinary was about to ensue. But so perfectly were they disciplined, that the crew of a man-of-war, at quarters, never stood with greater gravity, nor in an attitude expressive of more respectful obedience, than did these three-score outlawed seamen who served under the flag of Lars Vonved. All were attired in a species of uniform, consisting of dark loose trowsers of thick homespun woollen cloth, from the cottage-looms of Denmark and Sweden; a blue Jersey shirt, also of warm woollen

texture, reaching up to the throat, and tastefully ornamented with green braid on the breast; and a full skirted blue jacket. They also wore uniform felt hats—low-crowned and wide-brimmed—and a broad belt of black leather round the waist, secured in front with a bright steel buckle. At the back of each man's belt was attached a leathern sheath, containing a sharp broad-bladed knife set in a strong oval hilt of wood. The collars of their blue-checked cotton shirts were turned down over the neck rolls of their jackets, man-of-war fashion. Altogether, they were a strikingly fine crew of picked veteran seamen, and there was nothing whatever in their dress or bearing to indicate that they were men who lived in perpetual risk of being captured and put to death for violating the laws of their country. Many of them had wives and families—all of them had relatives and friends. What strange fascination, or fanaticism, or utter recklessness, induced them to devote their lives to the service of a Rover? Were they indeed pirates? The world's rumour denounced them as such; but rumour oft hath a lying tongue.

Besides Lieutenant Dunraven and Herr Lundt, there were two other officers, respectively ranking as second and third mates of the Skildpadde. Both were middle-aged men, and of tolerable education, although not precisely of the class denominated gen-

tlemen. The name of the second mate was Martimas Mellem, a native of Carlskrona in Sweden. He was a large powerfully built man, with a stern and rather forbidding countenance, but he was much esteemed by Lars Vonved for his skill and well-tried fidelity. The third mate was Evert Löresletten, a jolly personage, with a round, blooming, smiling countenance, and an air of consummate bonhomie. He seemed a man on perpetual good terms with himself and everybody else. The uniform of these four officers was simple and not devoid of good taste. They wore wide trowsers of fine dark blue cloth, with a narrow red seam, and a long single-breasted surtout of the same material, closely buttoned up to the chin, and braided at the cuffs and skirts. A black varnished belt supported a short sword resembling a couteau-de-chasse, which they wore rather as a mark of their rank than as a weapon either of offence or defence. Their caps were of blue cloth similar to those worn by naval officers, and were ornamented with two very narrow gold bands, or rather gold cords, and a little silk rosette of red, blue, and white, affixed to the front.

The petty officers were the boatswain, the carpenter, and the gunner. Their dress was precisely similar to the men's, but distinguished by the figure of a tortoise (in allusion to the name of the vessel), skilfully

worked in braid on the breast of the Jersey over-shirt, and on the upper part of the right sleeve of the jacket.

In a few minutes the first officer re-appeared on the quarter-deck, preceding Lars Vonved. Every officer and man lifted his cap in salute, which Vonved acknowledged gracefully, yet gravely. The Rover himself now wore his usual dress when on board. It consisted of trousers similar to those of his officers, but instead of a surtout, he wore a plain black velvet vest, fitting perfectly to his body, and closed up to the throat with a row of small round buttons of solid gold; and a very ample blue jacket of fine cloth, wide side pockets, sailor fashion. His hat somewhat resembled those worn by his crew, but its material was rich purple velvet, trimmed with a rare and very costly fur, and one side was looped up with a gold band, secured by a glittering precious stone. A simple broad black ribbon loosely encircled the neck of his shirt, the small snow-white collar of which contrasted well with the black vest over which it was turned. On the whole, his singular attire, although in some respects not exactly seamanlike, was picturesque and attractive, and it harmonized well with his imposing figure. He bore no weapon of any sort.

"Lieutenant Dunraven," said Vonved, "are all hands present?"

"I believe so, Captain Vonved."

"Call over the roll, sir."

The lieutenant, who spoke excellent Danish, bowed, and immediately did as ordered, reading from a muster-paper he held in his hand.

Every man answered to his name.

"All present, Captain Vonved."

"It is well," responded the Rover, making a step forward, whilst his keen eye glanced from face to face of the assembled crew as though he sought to scan their several expressions and penetrate their thoughts. The hardy seamen stood motionless, and gazed at him with eager yet deferential attention and strongly aroused interest.

"Officers and crew!" exclaimed Vonved, assuming an attitude of simple dignity, and speaking in a tone of calm decision, each word falling slowly, clearly, and emphatically from his lips: "I am thankful to stand once more in your midst. I know how faithful to me, and how devoted to my hazardous fortunes you have ever approved yourselves; and many of you would, I feel assured, risk life at any moment to serve, or to aid, or to save me."

"All, Captain Vonved! we all will do that," exclaimed several voices.

"No, my friends," said Vonved, with a sad smile, "not all. There are sixty-two of ye now listening to my voice, and of that number I hope, yea, I verily

believe, that sixty-one are men in whose hands I may trust my life at all times and under all circumstances —men whose hearts never entertained one disloyal or traitorous thought towards me or any of our company. Such are the sixty-one, but the sixty-second man is a Judas."

The last brief sentence, which was spoken with terrible emphasis, albeit in a subdued and almost mournful tone, electrified the crew. They drew in their breaths, and for a few seconds gazed at Vonved as though doubtful whether they had heard aright, and as though they sought confirmation of his fearful words in the expression of his countenance. Then a deepening murmur arose, and each man gazed excitedly and sternly at his fellows.

"It is too true," resumed Vonved, and he now spake with a degree of plaintive energy as well as impressiveness; "and it is to denounce that perjured traitor that I have called you together, for we are now standing in solemn council to judge one of our own number by the league and law which we have all sworn to obey, to uphold, and to fulfil."

He then, in a few vivid sentences, related to them his betrayal at Ronne, the explosion of the Falk, and his own solitary escape. He explained how he had learnt from the officer in command of the troops which seized him the manner of his betrayal.

Loud cries of indignation, amazement, and generous rage, then burst from the crew, and with one voice they demanded the name of the traitor.

"Who is he? Tell us, and we will rend him limb from limb!"

"Nay, my men, not so," responded Vonved with a gesture of authority, and a look which warned and reminded all that he was one who would instantly enforce it if needful. "Ye forget that we are met to try ere we judge. Forbid it that ye should condemn a man on my unsupported testimony, and without fair trial. Who is he? He is one whom I believed faithful; he is blood-brother to one whom I know to be devoted to my person. Who is he? Sixty-one of ye look me boldly in the face, all aflush with honest anger, but the sixty-second dare not uplift his eyes. Who is he? Where is he? *There!* men, behold the Judas."

As he spake the last ominous words, Vonved, with outstretched arm, pointed to a man who had slunk back in the rear of his shipmates, and who was dodging behind a gigantic Norwegian in a shrinking attitude, with drooping head, as though mortally anxious to elude observation. This was the solitary man who had so reluctantly obeyed the summons of all hands.

"What! Jörgen Neilsen! Jörgen Neilsen, art thou the Judas?" roared they.

"By Balder's keel! little need to question him," muttered old Carl Bredvig the boatswain. "Only look at him, messmates and shipmates all. Look, and ye will judge."

Jörgen Neilsen was instantly grasped by a dozen merciless hands, and many stalwart arms were raised to smite him.

"Hold, men!" thundered Vonved. "Ye forget yourselves. Bring Jörgen Neilsen aft."

The unhappy man was whirled to the space between the group of officers and the crew.

"Two of ye hold him securely; the rest stand back as they were."

The order was obeyed; yet threats and execrations mingled loudly.

"Silence, men!"

Some excited murmurs still prevailed.

"Silence, all!" sternly reiterated Vonved, and profound silence ensued.

"That man," continued he, pointing to Neilsen, "is the traitor—him I denounce, and him only. Boatswain!"

"Here, Captain Vonved!" respectfully answered the sturdy weather-beaten old seaman, whose grizzled beard and furrowed cheeks bore eloquent testimony

to the three-score years he had battled with life's stormy ocean.

"Take four men, and go below for the chest of Jørgen Neilsen. Bring it here immediately."

The old boatswain touched his hat, and with four hands whom he selected, hurried on his mission. During their very brief absence not a word was spoken on the quarter-deck. The wretched prisoner, Jørgen Neilsen, was personally a fine seaman-like fellow, tall and well-proportioned, and possessing a singularly handsome and prepossessing countenance. At least, such was his ordinary appearance; but now his manly figure shrunk, as it were, and contracted in every limb, his head drooped on his breast, his knees bent, his long flaxen hair fell in lank dishevelled masses and partially hid his pallid face; but enough was visible to show that it was convulsed with agony and mortal dread. His shipmates scowled savagely at him, and deadly curses were inwardly invoked on his head. He would have sunk to the deck had he not been upheld.

Speedily did the boatswain and his assistants reappear with the chest, which they deposited at the feet of Vonved; and the crew, urged by an irresistible impulse, pressed aft, and grouped around in a close circle, in the centre of which stood Vonved and his officers, the prisoner and his chest.

"Open it," said Vonved, "and search for the hundred and fifty dollars he received at Ronne, as the first instalment of his reward for my betrayal. They were given him in a seal-skin bag, the string of which was a sinew of the leg of a rein-deer."

A cry arose for the key, but the grim old boatswain, with a single vigorous kick of his ponderous foot, encased in a huge sea-boot, burst up the lid.

The contents of the chest, principally consisting of clothing and the usual miscellaneous articles of a seaman's outfit, were tossed out, and from among them fell a letter. The further examination of the chest was postponed until Dunraven had read this letter aloud. It was from the commander of the troops at Ronne, in answer to some previous communication of Neilsen, and it mentioned the reward which would be paid him for his contemplated treachery, and promised a personal pardon in case he and the crew of the Skildpadde were captured. Expressions in the letter clearly intimated that Neilsen had been sometime in negotiation to betray not only Vonved, but all the crew. The traitor must have been infatuated to keep this damning proof of his treachery in his chest.

A hurricane of denunciations and curses burst forth when the reading of the fatal epistle was concluded;

but Vonved calmly interposed, and ordered the examination of the chest to be proceeded with.

At the very bottom, in one corner, and hidden by a piece of canvas stamped down, a bag, precisely like the one Vonved had described, was discovered.

Without speaking, old Carl Bredvig tendered the bag to Vonved.

The Rover balanced it a moment in his hand, half-audibly muttering—"And this was to be the price of my blood!" Then handing it to his first officer, he calmly said,

"Lieutenant Dunraven, open this bag, and count the contents."

Amid a brooding silence, broken only by the occasional creaking of the booms, and the flapping of the brailed spanker overhead, the lieutenant untied the knots of the rein-deer's sinew securing the mouth of the bag, and carefully emptied its contents on the lid of the chest. A large quantity of silver specie-dalers rolled out, and Dunraven deliberately counted them, his dark eyes fiercely glistening the while, and set them in piles of tens. When the last dollar completed the fifteenth pile, the suppressed rage of the incensed crew, who already were to a man convinced of the guilt of the accused, broke forth into a simultaneous roar of execration:

"Overboard with him! Smite him! Kill him!"

Limb him!" yelled the men who had long eat at the same table with him, and slept by his side.

Again Vonved rebuked them, and turning to the prisoner, he said, with unaffected solemnity, and a touch of pitiful feeling,

"Jörgen Neilsen, what have you to answer to the charge? Speak! and speak fearlessly, if you have aught to say in your defence."

Instead of replying, the miserable man uttered a heartrending groan, and convulsively shaking off the relaxed grasp of the two men who guarded him, he fell prone at the feet of Vonved, with clasped hands, and screamed,

"Oh, Captain Vonved! pardon!"

"Do you confess that you betrayed me—that you compassed my death?"

"I do! The foul fiend tempted me! Pardon, Captain Vonved, pardon!" and he grovelled in the extremity of despair.

"Rise!"

Neilsen only debased himself yet lower at the feet of the man whose cruel death he had compassed fruitlessly, and to his own destruction.

"Rise, wretch!" reiterated Vonved.

"O, Captain Vonved! I cannot rise—I dare not rise—I will not rise until you pardon me!"

"Ay," sighed Vonved, in an accent of gloomy pity,

"I do pardon you from my very heart, as freely and as fully as I hope that God will yet pardon me; but, the law which binds us all together must be fulfilled."

As he spake, Vonved signed to the men who held Neilsen, and they forcibly upraised the unnerved suppliant.

"Officers and men!" cried Vonved, "it is our duty to proceed in this case as our solemn oaths have rigidly prescribed. The evidence of the guilt of Jörgen Neilsen is overwhelming, and he has himself confessed it. I forgive him from my soul, and were I alone jeopardized by such guilt as his, I swear unto you that I would not lift a finger to punish him. No; I would leave him to the torment of his own conscience, and remorse alone would be a greater punishment than any which we can inflict. But we have all bound ourselves by a solemn league and compact, and, if we swerve one tittle from what it prescribes, we are false unto ourselves, false to each other, and false to that covenant so fearfully sealed. Our law must be satisfied. I urge it not for vengeance—for a spark of vengeance I have not in my breast. It is for the security of each and all of us that we must now make a signal example. It was expressly stipulated in the bond, to which we have so awfully sworn, that if any man or officer betrayed or endeavoured to betray his fellow, he should surely

be put to death, provided that two-thirds, at least, of the crew voted his condemnation. So be it."

Ejaculations of acquiescence and approval were uttered on all sides.

"Lieutenant Dunraven," continued Vonved, speaking huskily, and with evident pain; "you will now call on each man of the crew to vote in the order his name stands on the muster-roll, and when he delivers his verdict, let him remember it is on oath."

Dunraven, in a sonorous voice, commenced with the first name on the roll, which happened to be that of Nils Solvöi, the gigantic Norseman, behind whom the wretched conscience-stricken traitor had vainly sought to elude observation.

"Nils Solvöi! do you pronounce Jörgen Neilsen guilty, and do you vote that he be put to death, in the manner prescribed by our laws and ordinances?"

The Norwegian immediately uplifted his ponderous right arm, and stretched conspicuously forth three fingers of his brawny brown hand—that being a Danish form of observance when a man delivers his testimony on oath, or has an oath administered to him—the three fingers being deemed symbolical of the three Persons of the Trinity.

"He is guilty. He must die. Let him walk the plank. That is my verdict."

These four brief yet terrible sentences were uttered

by Solvöi in a harsh determined voice, devoid of the faintest tone of pity.

The same question was deliberately put to each man of the crew, in succession, and, in every instance the verdict was precisely to the same effect.

Not a word of comment was spoken by any individual during these solemn interrogations and answers; but, from time to time, the supremely miserable man, whose doom was thus pitilessly pronounced, groaned and writhed, and when he heard the names of those who had been messmates and particular friends called by the lieutenant, he raised his head and glanced imploring at them, but, in every instance, they only answered his piteous mute appeal by looks of implacable hatred and detestation.

The question was next put to the petty officers, and, after them, the superior officers, including Lieutenant Dunraven, each formally delivered his verdict. Officers and men were alike unanimous. Not a dissentient voice was heard—not a solitary plea for mercy was uttered. Vonved himself assented to and confirmed the judgment of his followers.

What were the feelings of Jörgen Neilsen when Vonved's lips finally sealed, as it were, his irrevocable doom, could only be conceived from his physical aspect. His terror increased to such an uncontrollable degree that every limb visibly shook and writhed;

his quivering bloodless lips receded mechanically and exposed his chattering teeth ; and his countenance was frightful to look upon, so shockingly did it express the unutterable horror with which he anticipated his inevitable, impending execution. He endeavoured to speak, but only some incoherent words were audible. But when he heard Vönved give certain orders to the officers, he suddenly started into vigorous volition, as though a sword had pierced his vitals, and again convulsively extricating himself from the grasp of his guards, he flung himself on the deck and clasped the knees of Lieutenant Dunraven, ejaculating in a piercing, unnatural voice—

“ Oh, Lieutenant Dunraven, speak a word for me ! You can do it—one word—oh, save me ! save me !”

The lieutenant, with a look of unappeasable indignation and disgust, jerked himself from the nerveless clasp of the suppliant, and flung him aside as though his very touch was pollution, but deigned not to respond by a single word.

Then Jörgen Neilson abjectly supplicated Herr Lundt, the youngest man on board, and one whose gentle and generous nature he might naturally hope to excite to some token of compassion.

“ Herr Lundt ! for the love of heaven have pity on me ! Say one word for me ! Dear Herr Lundt, remember we were born in the same town—I have

carried you a hundred times in my arms when you were a little child—I climbed the pinnacled cliffs of Brettenvelsen to get for you the young eaglets—I taught you to swim, to row, and to sail—all your family knew me, and were kind unto me—Oh, Herr Lundt! remember this!—will *you* not say one word to save me?”

Lundt was deeply moved by this passionate and really touching appeal. He would have been, indeed, unfeeling, had it been otherwise, for nothing so probes and softens the heart of a man who is not absolutely hardened by long contact with the world and the world’s hollow wickedness and soul-deadening depravities, as any simple memories of his sinless childhood, and happy boyhood, and golden youthhood. The despairing being who appealed unto him must have instinctively felt this.

Lundt flushed crimson to the brow, and then his rich young blood receded like a tide; he became deathly pale, and trembled with emotion. A violent struggle was shaking his soul.

Lars Vonved gazed keenly at his young friend, evidently sympathizing with him in his cruel dilemma.

The agitation in Lundt’s breast was extreme, but his mind was quickly decided.

“Neilsen! Jörgen Neilsen! what foul fiend tempted thee to do—to do what thou hast done?”

"O, Herr Lundt! dear Herr Lundt!" sobbed the doomed traitor, a wild flush of baseless hope for the moment flickering o'er his ghastly features, as the young officer uttered the first words at all indicative of pity which had hitherto been addressed to him; "it was—yes, indeed it was the foul fiend who tempted me!"

"Ay, the foul fiend oft tempts us all," retorted Lundt; "but we do not yield to him as thou hast done. 'Tis true all that thou hast said, Jörgen, about my childhood and boyhood. O, I would have given all I possess in this world to have been spared seeing thee thus! Thou hast done an accursed deed, and I have voted to put thee to the death thou hast merited, but if—if it could be—if I could save thee—no, it is not possible! No, thou must die."

"Die!" shrieked Jörgen. "O, Herr Lundt, by the memory of"—

"Say no more, Jörgen," interrupted Lundt, clenching his hands together, in bitter tribulation of spirit; "what is done is done. Were we even what we are falsely accused of being—a crew of pirates—still thou wouldest be condemned to die by the just law which decrees death to him who betrays his outlawed shipmate. But though outlaws, we are not pirates—though rovers, we are not corsairs—yet thou betrayed thy captain, and infamously plotted to sell every one

of us—covenanted to deliver us one and all to certain ignominious death, to glut thy cursed greed of gold. What! dost thou think that the recollections of my childhood will stifle in my breast my abhorrence of thy crime? Dost thou imagine that I can look upon thee without detestation after what thou hast done? What! Jörgen Neilsen! shall I plead for thy life after thou hast traitorously sold, for a handful of silver, my dear and honoured friend and commander, Lars Vonved, Count of Elsinore? O, Jörgen! how couldst thou sell *his* blood? Thou well knowest he is the last of his princely line—in his veins flows the hallowed blood of our ancient Danish sovereigns—and to him and to all of us thou hadst sworn an awful oath of fidelity. No, Jörgen Neilsen, I cannot save thee, even if I would. Thou must die—and may heaven have mercy on thee!"

Lundt spake vehemently, and, as he uttered the last sentence, he burst into tears, and sobbed aloud. For a moment he stood motionless, his heavy tears patterning on the deck at his feet, amidst an unbroken silence; and then, with a low wailing ejaculation, he turned round, and pressing one hand hard over his breast to still the throbbing of his generous heart, he strode with agitated steps to the taffrail. Sympathizing looks and whispers from many of the crew and officers testified their appreciation of his feelings, and not

one was there who did not reverence the emotion which unmanned the brave and loyal mariner. Lars Vonved himself, whose eyes had filled to overflowing during this affecting episode of the tragedy, immediately followed him, and grasping the trembling hand of his young and devoted friend and follower between both his own, exclaimed—

“Dear Lundt! from my heart’s core I feel for you. Cruelly have you been tried and tested—nobly have you performed your duty. What is to be done must be done, but you need not witness it. Go below till all is over.”

“If you will permit me, Captain Vonved, and if my shipmates will not deem me womanish for”—

“No,” emphatically interrupted Vonved, “believe me, my friend, there is not a man who will not respect, admire, and love you more than ever for your conduct this day. Go below, I entreat—nay I command you!”

Without another word, Lundt gripped the Rover’s hand very hard, and descended by the companion-way to the cabin.

Vonved slowly walked back to the clustering group he had quitted, and with his usual wondrous self-command, he instantly assumed an air of stern composure.

When Jörgen Nielsen saw Lundt go below, and

Vonved return, the last spark of hope which had flickered in his bosom seemed to die away, and his head once more drooped inert on his breast, and his arms fell nervelessly by his side.

"Raise him to his feet, and let him not kneel again!" exclaimed Vonved, with a gesture of command.

He was immediately obeyed.

"Bind his arms securely behind him."

This, too, was done with the quick dexterity of seamen, the unhappy man making no resistance, and passively suffering his wrists, and his arms above the elbows, to be firmly pinioned together.

"Lash a thirty-six pound ball in canvas, and bring it here with a few fathoms of half-inch," was the next order.

Neilsen at this moment raised his head, and gasped twice or thrice ere he could faintly cry—

"Water! for the love of God, give me water!"

Nils Solvöi brutally mocked the imploring cry of the broken-hearted wretch, by telling him that he would soon have water enough; but Vonved sternly rebuked the unfeeling Norwegian for his cruel taunt, and ordered him instantly to bring a can of water from the scuttle-butt, or large cask, kept on the forecastle for the common use of the crew. Solvöi thereupon ran forward, and brought the ordinary long

round tin can (having cut the lanyard which secured it to the cask), filled to the brim, and held it to Neilsen's lips. The poor creature, whose awful mental agony had induced thirst to such a degree that his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth, eagerly gulped the water to the last drop, and then Solvöi hurled the empty can far into the sea, swearing that never should any honest seaman again drink from a vessel polluted by touching the lips of a traitor.

Vonved now issued order to prepare the fatal plank, and whilst that was being done, he directed the gunner to cast off the lashings of the great gun, and to load it for a blank discharge. This gun was a magnificent bronze thirty-six pounder, of extraordinary length. Each side of its breech was ornamented with exquisite designs in bold relief, being emblematic figures, wreaths, scrolls, &c., and the muzzle was elaborately chased. Originally it had belonged to the crown of Spain, and the royal arms of that country were conspicuously displayed above each trunnion. Vonved had purchased it at Mexico for a very large sum, although not more than the gun—which was said to be much more than a century old—was intrinsically worth, for it was not only in every respect as efficient as on the day when its artistic decorations received the finishing touch, but it also had the reputation of being unrivalled for its immense range, and

the accuracy with which it propelled its heavy balls. This very formidable piece was mounted on a traversing platform, between the fore and main masts, and was the only cannon on board. Vonved had whimsically christened it "Sweetlips," and that name was inscribed in golden Gothic letters around the end of the muzzle. The cannon was not discharged by a lock in the usual manner of ship-guns, but by a match, like land artillery.

There was something very terrible in the peculiar alacrity which the crew, one and all, manifested to carry out the dread preparations for the execution of their doomed shipmate. Their hearts were steeled against him, and inaccessible to any emotion or impulse of pity for his fate, and they actually seemed to begrudge him his fast fleeting minutes. Superadded to their intense hatred of his treachery, was their disgust at the extreme pusillanimity he now exhibited. This excited a spirit of savage contempt, and many of them openly expressed it in graphic language. Had Neilsen met his inevitable fate with hardihood, or at least with manly resignation, these rugged sons of the ocean might have felt a touch of pity and compassion, and certainly they would not have despised as well as hated him. Of all things, a thoroughbred seaman abhors a recreant spirit. A craven coward he values less than a dog.

The draught of water revived the half-paralysed man, and an incident occurred almost simultaneously, which roused him yet more from his stupor of despair. He had a little Laland dog on board, of a species resembling the Scotch terrier, and this animal now made its appearance, and ran to its pinioned master, and rearing on its hind feet, rested its fore-paws against his knee, looking up in his face with sparkling eyes, and wagging its tail, as though expecting the customary caress. Neilsen looked down at his dog, and uttered a heartrending groan. The little creature at once ceased its motions, turned its head from side to side with a frightened look, and then cowered at his feet whining and trembling, evidently conscious that some inexplicable calamity had overtaken its master.

This touching little episode seemed to affect several of the spectators more than any of Neilsen's appeals, and he himself appeared to be immediately stimulated by it to make one final effort to obtain mercy. He turned to Vonved, and whilst big drops of perspiration—literally the sweat of agony—broke from his pallid brow, and the rigid muscles of his face contracted spasmodically, he once more raised his piteous cry for pardon.

"Oh, mercy, Captain Vonved! have mercy on me."

"Mercy," retorted the Rover, in a measured pitiless tone; "why should mercy be shewn unto thee? Thou didst perjure thy soul to betray me, and deliberately covenanted to betray all who sail under my flag. Not a pang did it cost thee to deliver me up to the dungeon, the scaffold, the wheel!"

"Oh, I did a monstrous deed; but have mercy on me, Captain Vonved—mercy for the sake of my wife; my young and innocent wife and child."

"Ha, thy wife and child?" hoarsely cried Vonved. "I, too, have a wife and a child. Didst thou think of *them* when thou receivedst the price of my blood?"

"My wife—my poor wife," moaned the miserable wretch, "she will be reduced to beggary if my life is taken."

"No," said Vonved, "she will not, for I will provide for her. Yes, I swear to do that."

"My brother, Captain Vonved; my brother Mads. Oh, he is heart and soul devoted unto thee—for *his* sake have mercy on me."

"Thy brother! Ay, he is true as steel; but thou shouldst not invoke his name. Thy brother Mads. Ay, did he stand here he would drive his dagger up to the hilt through thy false heart, and ring curses in thy dying ear."

"Oh, Captain Vonved, will nothing save me? Give

me life—life!—’tis all I crave. Only let me live—life: life is all I crave.”

“Jörgen Neilsen,” solemnly answered Vonved; “art thou, indeed, a man? The veriest wretch who crawls through a despised existence would scorn to debase himself as thou art doing. Why shouldst thou so cling to life? Life! Dost thou imagine that existence would be life after what thou hast done? Burning shame and dishonour is indelibly branded on thy brow, and hadst thou the spirit of a seaman, thou wouldest welcome death as a kindly refuge from the insufferable stings of remorse.”

“Oh, Captain Vonved,—must I—oh, my God!—must I, indeed, die—die such a death?”

“Thou must. No more, Jörgen Neilsen—speak no more—for as surely as my soul liveth thou shalt presently die the death of a perfidious traitor.”

At these fearful words the last faint glimmering spark of hope in Neilsen’s breast was extinguished for ever. He now yielded to the utter prostration of supreme despair, and never audibly spake another word.

The appalling preparations meanwhile rapidly drew to a conclusion. A great plank of Norway pine, upwards of thirty feet in length, and about twenty inches wide, by four inches thick, which was lying in the hold among spare spars and stores, was got

out and passed on deck. It was immediately balanced over the lee bulwark amidships, in such a manner that the portion inboard just sufficiently exceeded in length that outboard, so that the end rested on deck. The gunner and his crew trained Sweetlips so as to point over the outer extremity of the plank, and loaded it with a double charge of blank cartridge. The thirty-six pounder ball, securely done up in a piece of new canvas, was prepared as ordered.

Lieutenant Dunraven now officially reported to Vonved that the necessary preparations for the execution were completed.

Jørgen Neilsen was then led, or rather supported, to the plank, for his limbs seemed impotent, and a piece of half-inch rope was bound round his right leg above the ankle, the other end of the rope being lashed to the canvas enclosing the ball. The bight of the rope, as seamen call it, or that portion between the ends, was four fathoms long, so that, although the ponderous ball was linked to the miserable being, it did not restrain his personal movement.

All hands now breathlessly awaited the consummation of the tragedy.

Neilsen's little Laland dog had closely followed the tottering steps of its doomed master, and when he was led to the foot of the plank, and the rope was being attached to his leg, the poor thing exhibited

symptoms of acute distress, by restlessly fondling against his feet, and tremulously moaning and whining in the most mournful and moving manner. Irritated by its piteous cries, Nils Solvöi savagely kicked it across the deck, with a loud imprecation.

This act did not pass unpunished. Lars Vonved, who had already been exasperated by the previous callous conduct of Solvöi towards the miserable prisoner, was now roused to irrepressible indignation, and with a swift back-blow of his open left hand, he struck the Norseman heavily to the deck, exclaiming :—

“Shame, fellow! How darest thou to treat an innocent dumb creature with dastard cruelty? What! brutally kick a poor little unoffending dog because it shows its affection for its master in his misery? Beware, Nils Solvöi! Look to thyself, man, and anger me not again this day. Twice hast thou provoked me to wrath within the hour—beware the third time!”

The Rover’s colossal figure dilated as he uttered this merited reproof and warning in a tone of fiery indignation, and he fiercely bent his flashing eyes on the culprit, as the latter staggered to his feet and wiped away the blood which flowed profusely from the side of his head and face. A blow in anger from even the open left hand of Lars Vonved was what few men living would wish to twice experience, and

Solvöi, who was merely a big, unfeeling fellow, coarse and brutal by nature, yet not devoid of some good qualities, of which stubborn fidelity to Vonved was one, dared not speak a word in reply, but repeatedly touched his hat in deference to the commander, who had taught his crew to fear as well as to love him. The man was completely cowed, and manifested that species of brute submission to a power both physically and intellectually superior which a dog invariably exhibits when severely chastised by its master for a fault of which it is quite conscious.

By the order of Vonved, the boatswain took the thirty-six pound ball in both hands, and stood close to the bulwark ready to heave it overboard; and the gunner stood by the breach of the great gun and blew his match. Jørgen Neilsen was placed on the plank, and a seaman tightly grasping each pinioned arm, he was made to mechanically walk up the inclined plane until he reached the bulwark. Then the seamen who held him each sprang on the bulwark itself, and by main strength of arm forced the poor, half-unconscious wretch to move forward until he stood on the plank two or three feet beyond the vessel's side, and there they kept him in their iron grip, awaiting the final signal.

Within the last half hour the sky had rapidly overspread with dense clouds, and now, from heaven's

topmost cope to the horizon all around, was one lurid dome which thickened and darkened until it was literally black. The light breeze of westerly wind had gradually died away until the huge black trysails of the Skildpadde, and the brailed-up mainsail of the Little Amalia hung perfectly motionless; but the monotonous languid swell of the sullen Baltic every now and then heaved the hulls of the two vessels, and caused their standing rigging to snap and jerk, and their spars to creak dismally. This ominous elemental change had almost passed unnoticed, so absorbed were all on board by the tragedy in progress; but at the instant when the crisis had arrived, and Lars Vonved uncovered his head, and peremptorily ordered every man to do the same, a blinding flash of lightning leapt from the heart of the brooding tempest, illumining the vessels and the sea on which they floated, and a tremendous peal of thunder almost simultaneously burst close overhead, and caused every plank and timber to vibrate from the deck to the keel.

That frightful flash smote the boldest heart with temporary terror—that deafening peal of heaven's artillery shook the strongest nerve. Yet he, the wondrous man whose followers they were, whatever he might secretly feel in his inmost soul, stood perfectly unmoved, and his proud lip curled, and his

eyes flashed brighter than ever as he calmly uplifted his right arm, and then paused a moment before he gave the dread order which was to launch a human being into eternity.

Ere that order could be uttered, a second time did the lightning flash more vividly, and the thunder rolled more heavily than before. The scorching lambent flame uplit every face, and revealed, in ghastly relief, the forms of the startled crew.

Whether dazzled by the electric fluid, or acting on some mechanical impulse (for reasoning power and moral will seemed extinct), Jörgen Neilsen writhed partially round, and turned his face once more and for the last time towards his pitiless shipmates. Not one who beheld his countenance would ever forget it to his dying hour. It was so frightfully convulsed and distorted as to be hardly human. The creeping lineaments were thickly bedewed with a bloody sweat; the eyes were so turned in their sockets that little of the pupils was visible, and the rigid lips, previously bitten through and through in agony, were widely parted, drawn upward and downward, and covered with greenish viscid froth.

At this awful juncture, Vonved's voice thrilled every heart as he exclaimed, in astoundingly deep and powerful tones :

"Boatswain, stand by to heave! Men, forward with Neilsen."

The two stalwart seamen who gripped Neilsen's arms instantly obeyed. They thrust him up the plank with all their might—he staggered helplessly forward—the plank overbalanced and tipped down to the surface of the sea—the declension irresistibly impelled the doomed being to the extremity of the plank, and the waters of the Baltic received his shuddering form. At that same moment the boatswain heaved overboard the cannon ball, and in the twinkling of an eye it dragged to the bottom all that was mortal of Jörgen Neilsen. The fatal plank, by its own impetus, plunged overboard after him, and rose many fathoms distant.

The suppressed excitement of the crew was vented in hoarse murmurs, smothered exclamations, and inarticulate cries.

"Fire!" shouted Vonved, and the gunner applied his glowing match to the vent of the great old Spanish cannon. A broad sheet of red flame was belched from its brazen muzzle, and the roar of its thunder reverberated over the inky waters of the Baltic. Hardly had the startling report died away in lessening rolls, ere, for the third time, a yet more awful flash of lightning smote the Skildpadde, shivering to fragments the maintopmast.

At a sign from Vonved, Lieutenant Dunraven handed him the sealskin bag, in which he had replaced the hundred and fifty dollars. Vonved instantly hurled it into the sea in the midst of the evanescent bubbles which marked the spot where Neilsen had disappeared for ever, and he exclaimed:—

“So perish all traitors, and *thus* may they ever receive their accursed blood-money!”

A fourth time the lightning vertically descended, and a man fell crashing full length on deck at the feet of Vonved.

It was the Norseman, Nils Solvöi. The levin-bolt had struck him, and he was dead.

Vonved half raised the body, and gazed a moment at the burnt and blackened features ere he laid the corpse gently down again. Then he sighed heavily, and mournfully ejaculated—

“Ha! my warning to thee, Nils Solvöi, was needless: *thou* wilt never more arouse my wrath. The vengeance of heaven is swifter and surer than that of man.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE KING'S CAIRN.

MUCH about the same hour of the same day that Vonved and his crew were trying their guilty shipmate, far off on the broad waters of the Baltic, Bertel Rovsing and his little friend Wilhelm Vinterdalen arrived at the house of Wilhelm's mother. It was a long walk from the castle, for they had first to traverse the entire length of the straggling town, and then to pursue a pathway winding along the indentations of the shore, until they reached the south-eastern extremity of the bay, where, at least an English mile distant from the last house of the suburbs of Svendborg, and nearly three miles from the old castle, rose a beautiful little green hill, of an almost perfect dome-shape, on the summit of which stood a small yet handsome villa-like residence, built of solid beams of pine, laid horizontally, and caulked between the seams like the planking of a ship, in a true Scandi-

navian fashion. The hill, or mount, had been levelled at the top so as to form a circular plane about a hundred and fifty feet in diameter. In the centre of this "table-land" was the house, and the ground around it was tastefully occupied with fruit and flower gardens, a hothouse, and a fish pond, the whole being enclosed by a broad ring or belt of evergreen shrubs which fringed the rim of the hill crown. Easy access to the house was provided by broad steps cut in the southern slope of the mount from the base to the summit, in such a manner as to form stairs, divided into flights by an occasional terrace, and every step was carpeted with the freshest verdure. The whole appearance of the mount, and the tree-embosomed residence on its summit, was exceedingly striking and romantic. The elevation of the hill above the level of the ground immediately surrounding its base, was probably over a hundred feet, and, as already mentioned, it was remarkably symmetrical in its proportions, being in the shape of an obtuse cone. Nature often performs strange freaks, and this might be one of them; but the tradition of the locality asserted the reverse. In other words, the natives of the vicinity firmly believed that the beautiful little hill was of purely artificial formation, and that, in fact, it was simply an enormous gravsted or cairn, erected in very ancient days by the labour of thousands of

hands, to mark the spot where some mighty Viking was interred. Hence it was known as the Konge-Grav, literally King's Grave, or, as it may be freely yet faithfully rendered, King's Cairn. Certain it is, that whether this beautiful little hill was a creation of nature or the work of man, it had been a noted traditional mount for at least five centuries, during which prolonged period its form continued unaltered; but at the commencement of the present century a local magnate, Herr Salvien, purchased it and a few acres of the grazing ground surrounding its base, from the Baron of Svendborg, and cut off the peak or summit of its cone to form a plane whereon he built the residence described. Herr Salvien was an elderly bachelor, and a noted antiquary. Possibly his predilections as such induced him to choose this singular site for his dwelling. He lived here very happily for ten or a dozen years, but one morning in the depth of winter, after a night of fearful storm, he was found dead in bed—his head almost severed from his body. At first it was supposed that he had committed suicide, but the doctors unanimously declared that a feeble old man could not possibly self-inflict such a ghastly incision; moreover, neither razor nor knife was discovered in the room, and the corpse reposed in bed in a natural posture, with the arms extended on each side beneath the coverlet.

Evidently Herr Salvien had been cruelly murdered in his sleep, and had died without a struggle. Murdered by whom? By robbers? No; not a single article in his room, nor elsewhere, was missing. By his own servants? They were strictly examined and pronounced innocent. Murdered for revenge? He had not an enemy in the world. His fate was an impenetrable mystery; but to this day the people of Svendborg sometimes allude to it, and darkly hint that it was a visible judgment on him for irreverently building his house on the cairn of an ancient Viking!

The heirs of Herr Salvien resided at Glückstadt in Holstein, and they at once ordered the King's Cairn to be sold: an order easily given, but not by any means easy to be carried into effect. A nameless yet palpable horror henceforth brooded over the house, and the hill which it crowned. "Sell it? Yes, you would doubtless be very happy to sell it, but who will buy it? Not we—not anybody who knows its history." So said the people of Svendborg—and they meant and felt what they said. The house remained unsold, and the servants of its murdered builder refused to live in charge of it, asserting that they were frightened o' nights by unearthly sounds and sights. The house was then closed—the doors locked—the shutters nailed up. The ghosts, the apparitions, the evil phantoms, and the perturbed

spirit of the ancient Viking, had it all to themselves !

In this melancholy state of abandonment and desolation, the romantic little villa remained year after year. Nobody would buy it—nobody would dwell in it—nobody would even approach the cairn after nightfall. The place was accursed. Weeds smothered its garden-plots; green moss and ivy grew over its mildewed walls; and a doleful pair of horned hooting-owls permanently roosted in an alcove over its principal doorway, and a very judicious choice of residence it doubtless proved, for swarms of sparrows colonized the projecting eaves and fantastic gables, and legions of mice established their head-quarters around the lower walls, so that their Serene Highnesses of the Alcove lived in an Owlish Paradise, and feasted on the sparrows and mice during the night, whereby they soon grew majestically fat and lazy, and all day long they nestled together, dozing and blinking, and occasionally indulging in a screech and a hoot to express their profound mutual conviction that their lines had indeed fallen in pleasant places. Ah, the owl is verily a sage creature, and the ancient did well to figure it as the bird of Minerva.

In absolute despair the Glückstadt owners of the villa of King's Cairn offered it rent free for a year to whoever would reside in it, prudently hoping by this

means to dissipate the superstitious dread in which it was enshrouded. In vain. The poorest inhabitant of Svendborg refused to domicile himself on the cairn, vowing that he would not dwell on it even if liberally paid to do so. Thus the evil spirits, and the mice, and the sparrows, and their Serene and Imperial Highnesses the owls, still remained the undisturbed tenants of the villa, and doubtless were a very happy and united family (whilst the sun shone); but who can foresee what a day may bring forth? Men cannot: nor even owls. One fine morning, to the incredulous amazement of the locality, the rumour spread that Mads Neilsen, a well-known fisherman, had accepted the offer to reside at King's Cairn rent free for a twelvemonth and a day. Incredible as the news sounded, it was nevertheless quite true. Honest Mads presented a letter to the Svendborg agent of the owners of King's Cairn, which he had received direct from them, whereby he was authorized and empowered to occupy the villa, and the agent was ordered to forthwith put it in a comfortable state of repair for his residence. How was it that such a man as Mads Neilsen had been thus specially communicated with by the owners? asked the gossips of Svendborg. And what could have induced him to accept their offer? Mads ostensibly made no secret of his own share in the affair. A friend of his (*who*

was that friend? queried the gossips; but Mads gave an oracular, that is to say, an exceedingly vague and utterly unsatisfactory response), had recommended him to the proprietors at Glückstadt, and the latter had promised him a fee of fifty specie-dollars at the expiration of his year's rent-free sojourn. He admitted (with an air of ingenuous modesty), that but for this tempting prospective reward, he never could have mustered resolution to defy the perturbed spirit of the ancient Viking, to say nothing of the angry ghost of poor old murdered Herr Salvien.

The gossips of Svendborg enjoy the richly deserved reputation of being as keen-scented and as far-sighted as any in His Danish Majesty's scattered dominions, and they unanimously agreed that although Mads Neilsen might speak the truth, yet that he assuredly did so with considerable mental reservation. All their practised skill in cross-examination, however, was vainly exercised on the cunning fisherman. He had said all he meant to say, all he was willing to say, all he thought it politic to say, and he was much too wary and too stubborn to yield one iota more of information in answer to the artful and insidious interrogations of the most accomplished newsmongers in all Denmark. "Ah," sighed the baffled and crest-fallen gossips, green with spite at their unparalleled defeat, "if the wretch only had a wife!" Unfor-

tunately (for them) Mads had not a wife; and even if he had been married, it was very questionable whether such a shrewd and iron-headed fellow would have intrusted her with any secret which he wished to preserve inviolate. Still the Svendborg gossips did not despair—they were too experienced in the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties. “Wait awhile,” whispered they, “and we shall see. The blade of corn does not appear immediately after the seed is sown. Once let it show its head above ground, and we shall know where to dig down to its hidden roots.” Sagacious and consolatory doctrine, which verily will lead to practical results, if the fates forbid not! Despair not yet, O ye astute gossips of Svendborg! Persevere, dig, delve, and ferret out the mystery, for the sake of your world-renown!

Mads Neilsen’s letter of authorization was duly accredited by the agent. A corps of artizans and labourers were marched to the summit of King’s Cairn within four-and-twenty hours after its presentation, and in advance of them all stalked burly Mads Neilsen, with a ladder on his shoulder, and a particularly long boathook in his hand. Arrived beneath the walls of the villa, Mads complacently deposited his ladder on the ground, and to the amusement of his motley troop of followers, he commenced operations by dexterously dragging down with his boathook

the scores of sparrows' nests clustered beneath the projecting eaves. Dire was the commotion among the swarms of indignant sparrows, and shrilly did they chatter their abhorrence of this unexpected and merciless onslaught on their highly respectable and inoffensive colony. Alas! poor innocent sparrows! ye may flutter around your violated homes, and may pipe piteously, but Mads the Fisherman hath no bowels of compassion. He will drag down every one of your laboriously constructed habitations, and scatter your speckled eggs, and your unfledged younglings on the hard pebbly ground, amid laughter and jeers from his cruel companions. And lo! three gaunt hungry-eyed cats, whiskers fiercely erect, and tails vigorously elevated, are trotting at full speed to the scene of devastation, even as vultures troop to the slain-strewn battle-field. Henceforward learn, O sparrows, that ye have worse enemies in the world than your neighbours the insatiate owls, albeit ye oft have chirruped hard thoughts of them. Ye are now recipients of a lesson by which even men may profit.

The sparrows are not the only horrified spectators of the raid. From every gaping crevice of the villa, from every window-sill, and every eave, sharp-nosed, bright-eyed mice, gaze with inconceivable, indescribable dismay. They behold what is going on—they see, O horror! their hereditary enemy, the cats.

Shriek, O mice! your fate will peradventure be even more deplorable than that of your fellow-colonizers, the bold sparrows, for they have wings to fly away, but ye have only four nimble little feet. Look forth once more at the fatal trio of Grimalkins! Observe their sharp claws, their long white teeth, their fierce whiskers, their contracted green eyes, void of pity for your kind, their lank sides, their ravenous aspect. Shriek, O mice! and flee to the innermost recesses of your secret haunts, and there hold earnest and eager council of safety in this hour of dread extremity.

Peacefully slumbering in their own snug alcove over the doorway, were the majestic pair of horned owls, when the uproar aroused them from their pleasant owlish dreams. The wise birds slowly opened their great eyes, and then suddenly shut them with a shudder of pain and disgust, for the morning sun shone full upon them. Again their startled Serene Highnesses looked forth, peering and blinking, and yet only half awake. Frightful was the vision of reality they beheld. Their pointed ears grew permanently erect, their wide eye-lids grew rigid, their round eyes dilated to the fullest extent, even in the sunbeams, every feather of their bodies puffed and quivered with terror. Too well did they comprehend what had come to pass; and prolonged quavering whoops and hoots feebly expressed their horror and

despair. Fly, O Birds of Minerva! while it is yet time, for lo! the enemy is close at hand. Approve yourselves wise as ye are reputed, or all Owldom will lose its renown for sagacity. Alas! they cannot fly, and they feel this fatal inability from the tips of their ears to the extremities of their downy toes. A long reign of peace, abundance, and luxury has undone them. They are overfed, overfat; they are enervated, unnerved; they have not yet digested a most dainty and immoderate supper of juicy young sparrows and delicious mice, which they commenced at twilight last evening, and finished a few minutes before sunrise this blessed summer's morning; and did the lives of all the citizens of Owldom depend on their individual exertions to escape their imminently impending doom, they could not flutter a pinion. Woe and dolour for Owldom; treble woe for their Serene Highnesses of the Alcove. "Whoo-hoo-hoo! Hoo-hoo-hoo-oo-ooo!" they dolefully hoot.

Ruthless Mads Neilson has dragged down the last sparrow's nest, and with a grim grin the remorseless fisherman now plants his ladder against the alcove, ascends it as coolly as he would the ratlins of a ship's shrouds, and grasps the astounded owls each by the neck. Spare them, Mads! forget not that they are Minerva's own Birds. He will not: for he hath a heart of stone, and he cares no more for Minerva

than he does for the ancient Viking. One dismal half-choked whoop, one final convulsive flutter of their wings, and then the huge heads of their Serene Highnesses are wrenched off; and heads and bodies are alike contemptuously tossed to the fierce trio of Grimalkins, who pounce upon them with growls of feline delight. Dearly have ye paid for your Owlsh Paradise, O hapless Birds of Minerva! Brief was your sojourn therein, yet it was supremely happy—whilst it lasted.

A quarter of an hour sufficed for the annihilation of the Owlsh Paradise, and then the laughing group of renovators (and iconoclasts) dispersed to set vigorously to work, each in his special function. Windows nailed up for seven long years were reopened to the fresh breeze and the warm sunshine; doors were forced wide ajar; the green tendrils of the clustering ivy were torn down from the walls; sparrows, bats, mice, and vermin of all kinds were mercilessly put to flight. The valuable furniture of the villa had been left almost undisturbed after the death of Herr Salvien, and it was now found to be little the worse for its long disuse. Mads Neilsen, having very little reverence in his soul for the relics of bygone ages, gathered together all the antiquarian curiosities which poor Herr Salvien had spent his life in collecting and classifying, and ignominiously transferred them to a

huge lumber closet, muttering the while sundry anathemas on “old-world rubbish,” which would have driven Herr Salvien distracted to have heard from mortal lips.

Within one week the villa was “overhauled,” as Mads phrased it, to his perfect satisfaction; and he thereupon took possession “for a twelvemonth and a day.” Mads was a bold man—much bolder than he affected to be, for in his secret thoughts he laughed to scorn the idea of spirits haunting King’s Cairn. Alone dwelt he—“monarch of all he surveyed,” and nobody disputed his right. No human being shared with him his temporary residence, but the three strange gaunt cats (who ceased to be gaunt and hungry-eyed, just in proportion as the mice and sparrows decreased in numbers) settled themselves along with him, and kept on very amicable terms with an enormous Jutland dog, of very savage renown, Mads’ especial pet. Weeks and months quickly sped, and the Argus-eyed gossips of Svendborg groaned in spirit because they could not even yet discover any clue to the mystery of Mads’ occupation of King’s Cairn. The solitary dweller himself pursued his customary calling of fisherman with unflagging industry, and made his appearance at the alehouse even less frequently than before he became the resi-denter of the villa; but this, it may charitably be

supposed, was solely owing to the distance of King's Cairn from the little seaport. He was oft closely questioned and cross-questioned concerning the presumed appearance of evil spirits o' night, and, with a spice of wicked waggery, he would shake his head very significantly, groan or growl mysteriously, and with great apparent reluctance admit that he *was* sometimes deprived of his natural rest. The impression derived from these dubious hints and half-confessions, induced the sage gossips of Svendborg to imagine that in verity he was persecuted by the indignant ghosts of the ancient Viking and of Herr Salvien; but Mads laughed in his sleeve at their eager credulity, for the only nocturnal disturbance he ever experienced was from the caterwauling of his trio of striped Grimalkins, or the wakeful howls of Aravang, his faithful yet ferocious Jutland dog.

Month after month quickly sped, until the eleventh of Mads' occupancy of the villa drew to a close, and then all Svendborg was electrified by a grand discovery made by a sort of self-elected committee of the most experienced gossips of the place. They had come to the conclusion that Mads the Fisherman occupied the villa because it was peculiarly adapted for smuggling! Truly, there was some reason to imagine they had hit on the right scent at last, for the seaward front of the cairn rested on the head of a short and

deep ravine which extended to the water's edge, and vessels of six to eight feet draught could haul close inshore at the mouth of this ravine, and owing to the physical formation of the shore, they could do this without the possibility of being perceived from any quarter with the exception of the cairn itself. His Danish Majesty's officers of the customs were forthwith on the alert, but a month's close watching on their part was fruitless, and Mads himself was evidently delighted by the absurdity of their suspicions, for he gleefully offered to permit them to overhaul the villa from basement to garret, and to take their station there to watch for smugglers in the offing. To a dead certainty the blade has not yet sprung above-ground, and therefore ye cannot discover the hidden roots, O gossips of Svendborg !

At the expiration of Mads' engagement, a fresh marvel agitated the Svendborgites. A considerable quantity of new and beautiful furniture arrived at King's Cairn ; and upholsterers, painters, and other skilled artizans, came all the way from Copenhagen to render the villa a thoroughly comfortable and elegant residence. "Oho !" shrilly chorussed the Svendborgites, "we can now see nearly as far into a mill-stone as the man who made it. Mads Nielsen has been a mere warming-pan—he has prepared the nest for the birds who will occupy it for good and all."

Verily, the sage gossips were not far wrong in their surmises this time, for within three weeks the villa received its future inmates, Captain Wilhelm Vinterdalen, his wife and child, an aunt of Madame's, a middle-aged female servant, and a nursemaid. Who were they? Whence came they? What had induced them to select King's Cairn, of all places in the habitable world, for their residence? Very natural queries, and to a certain degree easily answered. Captain Vinterdalen derived his title from being a ship-master, and it was understood that he commanded an East Indiaman belonging to either Hamburg or Bremen. Others, however, flatly contradicted this, and said he was master of a Greenland whaler belonging to the latter port. One fact was admitted as indisputable: Captain Vinterdalen was indeed a ship-master, and he must nett a tolerably handsome income from his profession, otherwise he could not have afforded to occupy King's Cairn in such style. The family had quitted Hamburg expressly to dwell at King's Cairn —some said for change of air; others said it was for cheapness of living; and a third party positively asserted that Captain Vinterdalen had won King's Cairn from the heirs of Herr Salvien at play in a Hamburg gambling-house. It was somewhat remarkable that neither the Svendborg agent of the reputed owners, nor yet Mads Nielsen, ever denied or contradicted in

any way these diverse rumours. Whatever they knew, they manifested no intention to enlighten King Frederick's lieges. As to Mads Neilson, he very quietly evacuated the villa, and removed to a solitary cottage on the island of Thorö, which had originally been built as a store-house for dried fish, but for a number of years had been abandoned. It was now speedily converted into a comfortable-enough dwelling for the hardy fisherman, who was permitted to occupy it for the merely nominal rent of one speciedaler (4s. 6d.), per annum, and an occasional dish of dainty fish to the steward of the Great Baron to whom the isle belonged. Mads was the only human dweller on Thorö; and he bore the reputation of being misanthropical and greatly inclined to a solitary or hermit-like existence, and it was affirmed he was a notorious woman-hater; but they who knew him best averred that Mads was a capital boon companion when in congenial company; that he was not at all unsocial, rightly understood, albeit as rough-mannered as a polar bear; and that although he certainly was not a "marrying man," he had a keen eye for rosy cheeks and neat ankles, and was perfectly capable of appreciating the charms the Svendborg (or any other) beauties. The eastern extremity of the island of Thorö was not above an English mile from the seaward base of King's Cairn, and thither Mads was

sure to sail at least twice or thrice a week, with an offering of fish to the Vinterdalens. It was very evident from the first that Mads was quite a favourite with this stranger family, and in a very short period he permanently established himself as a sort of humble friend and out-of-door servitor, performing all sorts of little services and commissions for them, and spending much of his leisure time in and about the villa. He happened, singularly enough, to be an enthusiastic amateur gardener, and Captain Vinterdalen permitted him to undertake the management of every inch of the garden-grounds of King's Cairn, excepting the little plot of flower-beds under Madame's especial care.

As regarded Captain Vinterdalen individually, the people of Svendborg knew no more at the expiration of four years than they did within four days of his first arrival. He seldom remained more than two or three weeks at the villa at a time, being absent on sea-voyages at least nine months a year on the average; and even when at home he very rarely descended from the summit of the cairn landward, but he often scrambled down the ravine at its seaward base, and embarked thence in Mads Nielsen's fishing-boat for a pleasure sail. So partial was Captain Vinterdalen to boating, that he and Mads not unfrequently went far out to sea, and were sometimes even absent for eight-

and-forty hours at a spell, to the extreme disquietude of the Captain's wife. That Captain Vinterdalen dearly loved his wife and child was nevertheless certain, and a romantic yet literally true story became current concerning their mutual history. Madame Vinterdalen was the only child of a Danish officer, Colonel Orvig, who fell at the bombardment of Copenhagen in 1807. His widow was left in narrow circumstances, and she returned to Hamburg, her native city, where her relatives soon had to perform the melancholy duty of attending her deathbed. Her sister, Madame Lerchomjer (a childless widow herself), undertook to adopt the orphan girl, and faithfully redeemed her pledge. Amalia Orvig grew up a fine, accomplished, and amiable woman. In her twenty-fourth year she happened to be one of a party of young people invited to take a pleasure trip down the Elbe as far as Glückstadt, in the yacht of Herr Blomster, a wealthy merchant of Hamburg. Nearly opposite to Glückstadt a sudden squall struck the yacht, and she capsized not more than fifty yards from the Holstein shore. A young man sprang from a wharf into the Elbe the instant he beheld this catastrophe, and swimming strongly out, reached the hapless yacht just as she foundered, amid the despairing screams of all on board. He grasped one young lady from the greedy vortex, and brought her

to shore in an almost lifeless state. She recovered, and was the only survivor of all the gay party who had sailed a few hours before joyous and full of innocent excitement. It was Amalia Orvig who was thus saved, and her deliverer from the jaws of death was Wilhelm Vinterdalen.

After a brief interval Amalia became the wife of Captain Vinterdalen. Two years subsequently, they broke up their household at Hamburg, and removed to King's Cairn, their only child, Wilhelm, being then a twelvemonth old. The aunt of Madame Vinterdalen accompanied them as one of the family, but did not survive very long.

During the four years she had been mistress of the villa, Madame Vinterdalen led a somewhat recluse life. This was partly attributable to the out-o'-the-way situation of her residence, but yet more to the fact that she really cared little for company. The Svendborgites marvelled at and commented upon this idiosyncracy; one attributing it to pride, another to bashfulness, a third to ignorance of the usages of polite society. A fourth charitably inferred that her reserve was in obedience to the morose commands of her husband. Those, however, who had seen most of Madame, admitted that she was a very lady-like and exceedingly intelligent and agreeable woman, and neither haughty nor cold-mannered. Above all,

the wife of the clergyman, with whom Madame Vinterdalen (who was exemplary in the performance of her religious duties,) became early acquainted, and interchanged friendly visits, everywhere declared that the lady of King's Cairn was thoroughly well-bred, warm-hearted, and generous-minded. This opinion carried much weight, and proved not unfounded. Madame Vinterdalen by-and-by was discovered to spend much of her leisure time in making clothes for the poor, which she distributed through the medium of the clergyman and his wife, who were also almoners of her bounty in the shape of money and food to a considerable annual amount. Nearly all her kind gifts were bestowed indirectly, for she appeared to be particularly desirous that the name of the actual donor should be kept secret, solely from the desire of doing good unostentatiously. A case of distress, brought under her notice by any person whomsoever, was sure to be relieved to the utmost of her power. No marvel was it that a woman of this character managed to spend her days pleasantly enough in calm retirement. She also knew how to render her dependants happy, for the two German servants, notwithstanding their inability to speak more than a few words of Danish, and their consequent isolation, refused to quit her service at the death of her aunt, who had long been their mistress, averring that in

their own country they had never been so contented and happy.

The clergyman's wife had originally spoken to Madame Vinterdalen about the strange and friendless young painter who had temporarily settled at Svendborg, and the story so aroused her womanly sympathy that she made minute enquiries concerning him, and learnt enough to dispose her to befriend and benefit him all she could, without offending his proud sensitive nature. The result was that Bertel Rovsing soon regarded the lady of King's Cairn as a friend worthy of his gratitude and his affection. He felt that she thoroughly appreciated his character and his peculiar position in life. He instinctively reverenced the true nobility of her disposition, her purity of soul, her lovingkindness, her unselfish delight in contributing to the happiness of all with whom she came in contact, her unaffected piety, her wifely and motherly virtues.

When Bertel and his little friend arrived at the base of the cairn on the present occasion, Wilhelm sprang forward and bounded up the verdant steps of the slope, exultingly shouting aloud that "Herr Rovsing is coming!" And by the time that Herr Rovsing surmounted the rim of the cairn-top, and passed through its evergreen belt, he was met by

Wilhelm's mother, who had hurried forth at the cry of the boy to welcome his companion.

Madame Vinterdalen was in the prime of womanhood, but looked considerably younger than she really was, for her life had hitherto been unruffled and unexciting; her habits had ever been simple and healthful; her mind guileless; her conscience unburthened; and never did she repose her head on her pillow until she had made her peace with God for all her transgressions and sins of omission and commission during the day that was past. No marvel therefore that she preserved the bloom of her youth almost unimpaired, for Innocence and Happiness (alas! that they are not always twin sisters!) conjoined, are the grand and only real conservators of Youth and Beauty. In person she was somewhat above the middle height, well proportioned, and of very graceful carriage; her demeanour unassuming yet dignified; her countenance not beautiful, nor handsome, nor even regularly featured, but exceedingly pleasant to gaze upon, for it was very comely, and it ever beamed with a charming expression of benevolence and innocent sprightfulness. Moreover, her complexion was exquisitely pure and glowing; her light auburn hair was magnificent, and her hazel eyes large and brilliant. Her voice was clear, soft, and melodious; and when she smiled her countenance was infinitely more

attractive than that of a merely beautiful female. A lovable, ay, and a lovely woman was Amalia Vinterdalen, and she was good as lovely.

This was not the first professional visit that Bertel Rovsing had made to King's Cairn. He had already painted both a half-length and a miniature of Madame Vinterdalen; a full-length of Wilhelm; and a portrait of the old and favourite servant. His present task was to paint a miniature of Wilhelm, to be ready to present to Captain Vinterdalen on his arrival, which was expected in three or four days. Bertel forthwith commenced his task with a firm resolve to produce a masterpiece of the kind. He had not forgotten his singular conversation with Wilhelm in his studio, and he made some inquiries of Madame Vinterdalen concerning Mads Nielsen. She informed him all she knew of Mads—that he was a very great favourite of her husband's, that she believed he had an extraordinary affection for their whole family, and that she liked him herself very much. Bertel Rovsing listened to all this, and the more he heard the more he marvelled.

## CHAPTER IX.

## CAPTAIN VINTERDALEN RETURNS HOME.

ON the fourth day after the execution of Jörgen Nielsen, very early in the morning, a small Danish vessel might have been seen hovering a couple of miles out at sea, directly opposite to the two islands which, as previously described, lie athwart the entrance to Svendborg Bay. That tiny sea-going craft was *jøegt*-rigged, and assuredly she bore, on the whole, a marvellous resemblance to Lars Vonved's beloved Little Amalia. But, on second thoughts, the Little Amalia's sails were coal-black, whereas, the canvas of this craft is snow-white. What of that? Coquettish ladies love to vary the fashion and colour of their apparel, and why should not a dainty little *jøegt* do the same? And lo! beyond the *jøegt*, far away on the extreme verge of the eastern horizon, there is something dark and indistinct; it might almost be taken for the wing of a huge sea-bird, were sea-birds

black like ravens. Look again ! strain your vision, and if you have the keen practised hawk's eye of a seaman, you will perchance be able positively to affirm that you can discern the faint tracery of a singularly-rigged vessel's spars. Ay, it is even so, and that fact strengthens the first conjecture. The *joegt* is the Little Amalia, and sports snowy canvas by way of a masquerade—quite innocently, let us charitably hope ; and the vessel hull down on the green waters of the Baltic is, in all human probability, none other than the guilty old Parsee-built Skildpadde.

Patience, friends ! Let us watch the mysterious manœuvres of that tricksy Little Amalia, and we shall, doubtless, be further enlightened by-and-by.

There is the long low island of Thorö, and we have a bird's-eye view of its barren shores. There, at the foot of its single hill, which steeply declines to within a few fathoms of the water's edge, nestles the white-washed wooden cottage of Mads Neilson, the fisherman, who lives there all alone, the sole permanent inhabitant of the island, although not exactly the "monarch of all he surveys," like Alexander Selkirk on Juan Fernandez, for a flock or two of sheep, and a score of cattle, find pasturage by browsing on the scanty herbage which sparsely struggles for existence on the sandy level tracts, and these animals belong to farmers resident on the mainland, who pay a small

rent to the Baron of Svendborg for the grazing privilege. Mads Nielsen himself, and a companion whom we recognise as his old friend and brother fisherman, Hans Petersen, are standing on the bit of level ground in front of the cottage, and their bulky figures loom hugely in the thin morning mist, for they are fully accoutred in fishermen's attire, and wear enormous thigh boots and fox-skin caps.

What has induced these two men to be abroad, and evidently on the look out, at so early an hour, for it is not yet three o'clock this balmy summer's morn? And what is the meaning of the extraordinary flag hoisted from a signal staff at the gable-end of Mads Nielsen's cottage? That flag cannot be seen by any curious gazer at Svendborg, for it is hidden by the intervening hill; and we have a shrewd notion that honest Mads is not at all desirous that anybody on the mainland should observe it. The flag is a long strip of black bunting, and when the freshening breeze uncoils and spreads it out, we observe three great white stars horizontally disposed at regular intervals in the sombre field of the flag. Somehow we cannot help being reminded that, when Lars Vonved signalled his *jøgt* from the deck of the Camperdown, by yielding his long sash to the breeze, *it* had three stars in its field. But coincidences will happen.

By the Keel of Balder! (to borrow Mads' favourite

ejaculation) the Little Amalia must have already seen that black flag, and counted its three white stars, for suddenly a couple of hands run forward and settle away the peak of the gaff which upholds her snowy mainsail, so that it droops like the wing of a wounded bird; and this manœuvre they deliberately repeat twice, so that, in all, they have lowered the gaff three times.

What does all this signify? Has it some occult meaning? Does any observer comprehend it?

Yes; there is no reason to doubt that Mads Nielsen perfectly understands the three measured dips of the Little Amalia's gaff. He utters a hoarse growl, indicative of intense private satisfaction, and with eager hands strikes the black flag with the three white stars from the staff at the gable end, and aided by Hans Petersen, who looks almost as pleased and excited as himself, he next hoists something resembling a round ball, which, on striking against the truck of the staff, bursts open and flutters in the breeze in the shape of a flag, one yard square, and white as the cygnet's down.

Mads and Hans breathlessly gaze at the Little Amalia, to see how this new signal is received. They are not long kept in suspense.

A bright flash from a musket-barrel darts from the stern of the Little Amalia, and simultaneously a ball,

precisely similar to that hoisted by Mads, ascends to the peak of her gaff, and unfolds in the same manner as his last flag, of which it is an exact counterpart.

This is enough. Mads and Hans haul down their signal, conceal their various flags in the cottage, and rush to the adjacent beach, where their half-decked fishing boat is moored. They drag her grapnel from its reluctant hold, and with lusty arms and inflated chests, ply their oars seaward. A cable's length from the shore they hoist the red lug-sail, and bear straight down on the Little Amalia.

The Little Amalia was gradually hove to, as the fishing boat neared her; four men of her crew were grouped at the gang-way amidships, and two men remained in conversation on the tiny quarter-deck. Those two were Herr Lundt and Lars Vonved.

The fishing boat was soon alongside, and whilst the two vessels were being temporarily secured together, Lars Vonved hastily descended to the cabin. His young officer at the same moment advanced to welcome the two fishermen on board, and immediately leading Mads aft, informed him that Lars Vonved wished to privately speak with him.

Bluff Mads, an absolute fanatic in his devoted attachment to Lars Vonved, is all aflush with pride and joy as he clumsily descends to the cabin. No sooner does he find level footing than Lars Vonved

outstretches both hands, and grips the horny palms of the fisherman.

“ God bless you, Captain Vonved ! ” cries Mads, with moistened eyes. “ Velbecommen hjem til Svendborg ! Ja, ja, ja ! ”

“ Taks, mange taks, min vin—min kjære ven ! ” (Thanks, many thanks, my friend—my dear friend !) ejaculates Vonved, in return.

And then the Rover presses Mads to sit down, and Mads awkwardly complies, seemingly very much afraid to injure the delicate crimson silk cushions, for he nervously seats himself on their very edge.

Vonved turns round and hastily produces a bottle of the finest French cognac and a couple of glasses from the superbly inlaid semi-circular zebra-wood locker at the stern. He fills the glasses, takes one in his hand, and motions Mads to the other. They clink glasses and drink. Then Vonved speaks :

“ I wished to see you alone before you had talked to our people,” said he, speaking in an anxious and troubled tone, gazing, however, with a look of intense kindness and sympathy at Mads.

“ Oh, your Excellency ”—

Vonved held up his finger in a warning way.

“ O, Captain Vonved,” continued Mads, wiping his rough brown forehead with the cuff of his coarse blue pee jacket ; “ you always honour me so that—well,

by Balder's Keel ! I needn't say what I feel, for you understand all I would say."

" I do, Mads—I do, my friend."

" Ah, Captain Vonved, you can't think what a relief it was to me, and to Hans, too, for that matter, when we saw your first signal at dawn !"

" You were on the look-out, then ?"

" Ay, Captain Vonved, and we have kept that look-out every morn-dawn for the last fortnight. Hans and I have been almost heart-broken this last three or four days."

" Ay ? Wherefore ?"

" Ja ! that we have. O, 'tis all right now ; but the lies they print in the papers now a-days would drive a fellow distracted if he was fool enough to believe 'em. Now, my mate, Hans Petersen, is sensible enough in the long run ; but he almost persuaded even me to credit a three-twister yarn which he had seen in the Kjobenhavn Fœdrelandet ! I dare say you have seen and laughed at it yourself, Captain Vonved ?"

" No, I now hear of it for the first time," said Vonved, gravely ; " what was it about ?"

" O, just a fly-away yarn that you had been betrayed at Ronne by one of your own crew, and that you had blown up the Falk at her anchorage whilst a prisoner on board. They tell stories so cleverly

now-a-days, that a plain-sailing man can hardly distinguish a lie from the truth."

" Then you did not believe the report ? "

" Why, Captain Vonved, at first I swore it was a wicked lie, for I could not think it possible that any of your own crew was a traitor ; but everybody here believed it, and—well, 'tis no matter now—but I have been very miserable till I saw your signal this morning ; and if ever I grapple with the lying scoundrel who set the false news afloat, I'll give him a real Svendborg hug that will teach him to speak the truth the rest of his life—provided he ever draws breath again after my arms have been round his ribs ! "

" But, Mads, Fœdrelandet did not lie wilfully ; and part, at least, of its narrative was truth."

" What ! true after all ! How can that be when I see you here ? "

" Too true, my friend. I *was* betrayed, and taken on board the Falk, and she exploded. I drifted out to sea on a spar, and was saved by an English ship."

Mads Nielsen uttered ejaculations expressive, first of simple amazement, and then of indignation and horror.

" Betrayed by one of your own crew ! The vile, perjured villain !—the demon—the Judas ! Did you discover him, Captain Vonved ? "

"I did; and his guilt was manifest to all on board. Moreover, he himself confessed it."

"And has he met his deserts?"

"Thou knowest the laws we have all fearfully sworn to obey?"

Mads nodded, and looked wistfully at the Rover.

"Well!" said Vonved, sadly, almost mournfully, "he has died as those laws prescribed."

"And his name, Captain Vonved—who was he?"

Ere replying, Vonved grasped the hand of the fisherman and pressed it hard, whilst he looked kindly and compassionately at his rugged lineaments, which now wore an expression of painful alarm.

"*Thou*," said he tenderly, "art true as steel. I have tried thee, and know thee, and I call thee—friend. But there was one who bore thy name, who"—

"O, my God!" ejaculated Hans, big drops of perspiration breaking from his forehead; "'twas as I feared! My brother—Jörgen—he was the accursed traitor?"

"Alas, yes."

"Well, well," gasped Mads, drawing a quivering breath, "I am thankful!"

"Thankful, Mads? For what?"

"That you have spared me the guilt of fratricide, Captain Vonved, for I solemnly swore to drive my

dagger through the heart of the man who had betrayed you, even though he proved to be my own blood-brother, and I would have kept my oath!"

"I verily believe thee, Mads," responded Vonved in a soothing tone, "but I do not commend thee therein. A brother's life is sacred. Be unutterably thankful that thy brother's blood is not on thy hands, and that thou were not even present and consenting unto his death."

"I *am* thankful, Captain Vonved—I have said it. And I am *thankful*, too, that our poor old father is not living to know the end of Jörgen—Jörgen was his pride, Captain Vonved—for he would have died broken-hearted to think that a son of his sold *your* blood! Yet rather would our father have lost both sons, and rather would I have lost my brother and my own right arm, than a hair of your head should have been injured by Jörgen's perfidy!"

Having thus spoken, Mads wept aloud.

Vonved was strangely moved. His eyes filled with tears, and he sighed heavily. The intense affection and unselfish devotion borne towards him by this seaman was almost inconceivable. Mads Neilsen had been cradled on the hoary deep from his very childhood, had lived a life calculated to deaden his sensibilities and harden his heart, and indeed was on the whole a man of fierce and savage passions, fearless,

unfeeling, and prone to evil,—yet he, this stern and rugged being, loved the outlawed Rover with a love surpassing that of woman !

“ O,” murmured Vonved, “ surely I cannot be an accursed, heaven-abandoned wretch, as some call me, or I never could have inspired a man like this with such sublime love ! I may yet be pardoned by my king, and reconciled unto my God !”

And then he grasped anew the tear-bedewed hands of Mads Nielsen between both his own, and exclaimed in a voice broken with heart-warm emotion—

“ Thou art henceforth more than friend—thou art my brother, and I will be to th e what poor J rigen should have been !”

The sun had not yet fairly arisen when the white-sailed Little Amalia and the red-sailed fishing boat were standing seaward in amicable company, steering directly for the Skildpadde, which steadily hovered on the extreme verge of the horizon. Arrived within hail of the Skildpadde, the latter promptly hove-to, and the pram of the jo gt was lowered from the davits and hauled to the gangway amidships. Lars Vonved, Herr Lundt, and Mads Nielsen embarked, and a single seaman rowed them alongside the Skildpadde. On reaching her deck a deep murmur of genuine sympathy burst from the assembled crew at

the sight of Mads Nielsen—for well did every man know him—and a score of hands as hard and rough as his own were eagerly thrust forward to give him the warm grasp of friendship; weather-beaten features quivered with unwonted emotion, and stern eyes which were wont to gaze unblenched on deadly dangers, now softened and moistened at his presence. And yet they were the men who had, a few days previously, mercilessly put to death their messmate, his brother! Mads knew it, yet neither by look nor by gesture did he betoken anger, nor was there even a latent shade of reproach in his demeanour. He spake not a word, but stoically repressed the welling anguish of his heart, and with clenched teeth, closed lips, and unshrinking eyes, he clutched nearly every proffered hand, ere he heavily strode after his idolized master, Captain Vonved, and descended with him to his private cabin. They were speedily joined by Lieutenant Dunraven and Herr Lundt, and for hours they remained in secret conclave.

Ere sunset the Skildpadde, with her satellite the Little Amalia, had stood far out to sea, and the lug-sailed fishing boat kept them company at no great distance to leeward.

It is evening—some thirty hours subsequent to the departure of Mads Nielsen and his fellow fisherman

from the island of Thorö, and their fishing boat has not yet been seen to re-enter Svendborg Bay. The long Danish twilight slowly fades away, and one by one the stars indistinctly creep forth.

In the parlour of the villa at King's Cairn, Bertel Rovsing had just given the finishing touch to an exquisite miniature of Wilhelm, and was preparing to return to his solitary home in the old castle of Svendborg.

There is a sound of opening and closing of doors, quickly followed by a footstep in the passage leading to the parlour. Madame Vinterdalen half rises from her chair, and with fast-throbbing bosom gazes eagerly towards the door. It opens, and in another moment her husband has crossed the threshold.

“Min fader! O, min fader!” shrilly cries Wilhelm, and with a scream of joy bounds to the breast of his father, who gives him one passionate kiss, and then opens his arms anew to clasp his wife to his heart.

“Min Kone! min kjære Kone!” fondly murmurs Captain Vinterdalen, as his strong arms closely yet tenderly enfold his wife and his child in one prolonged embrace. Ay, proudly and thankfully clutch them to thy heart of hearts, O, Vinterdalen! for a truer wife or a nobler boy no man claims as his own.

In the rapture of the moment the presence of the

young painter was forgotten by Madame Vinterdalen, and entirely unnoticed by her husband. Poor Bertel stood in confusion, and when Captain Vinterdalen's glance fell upon him, he blushed and bowed, and stammered something—he hardly knew what. Captain Vinterdalen himself started, and looking for an instant piercingly at the young man, who was a stranger to him, for on none of his previous sojourns at King's Cairn had they met. Madame Vinterdalen hastened to introduce Bertel to her husband, and showed him the miniature of Wilhelm. Captain Vinterdalen courteously uttered a few words, and glanced awhile at the miniature, which he pronounced to be a fine and faithful portrait. Then he again gazed with singular interest and curiosity at the painter.

“Bertel Rovsing?” repeated he, rather speaking to himself than addressing his guest; “I do not recollect that name. Bertel Rovsing? No, I have never heard it before.”

“Very probably not, Captain Vinterdalen,” rejoined Bertel, recovering his composure, and in turn looking somewhat eagerly and keenly at the Captain, “for I am a stranger in these parts.”

“And I, also. Yet now I look at you, I am somehow reminded of the past. Can I ever have met you before?”

“Not to my knowledge.”

" You are sure ?"

" Not sure : I only mean that I do not at present distinctly remember ever having previously seen you. I will not assert positively that I have not."

" It is strange," muttered Vinterdalen, with an air of perplexity.

" Did you not see Herr Rovsing on your last return home ?" suggested Madame Vinterdalen. " I have heard you say that you have never forgot any one whom you have ever noticed or spoken to."

" Very true," mused her husband, " but I never saw Herr Rovsing at Svendborg before. And moreover, it must be long years since I saw him."

" Are you certain that you ever *did* see me before, Captain Vinterdalen ?" asked Bertel, with a smile ; and yet the young man had an anxious air, and grew pale and nervous.

Captain Vinterdalen looked full at him, and paused ere he slowly and very thoughtfully replied—

" No, I am not certain, and yet I will frankly say that I feel by a sort of intuition that I really have seen—and known—you elsewhere."

" And long ago ?"

" Ay, long ago—very long ago !"

" That can hardly be, Captain Vinterdalen, unless you knew me when a child."

" How old are you ?" brusquely asked the Captain.

"I am five-and-twenty."

For a minute Captain Vinterdalen remained silent, with his hand over his eyes, as though he were racking his memory for images of the past. His wife seemed surprised, but did not interrupt his reverie, and Bertel Rovsing gazed at him with obviously increasing anxiety.

Again Vinterdalen spoke, and the low, clear, musical tones of his voice thrilled the painter in an inexplicable manner.

"You speak pure Danish, Herr Rovsing, but you do not at all look like a Dane?"

"I am a Dane, Captain Vinterdalen, and I have never been out of Denmark."

"So? Did you ever reside in Langeland?"

"Never."

"Nor at Aalborg?"

"No, I have never been further north in Jutland than Randers."

"You are not a Jutlander yourself," said Vinterdalen, rather though as stating a fact than asking a question.

"No, I am not; yet I spent many of my early years in the peninsula."

"Ay? But you did not acquire the Jutland accent. I should say you are a native of one of the southern isles?"

Bertel Rovsing opened his lips to reply, but suddenly checked himself, and with marked reserve, merely bowed. Captain Vinterdalen was far too shrewd a man to believe for a moment that this was to be construed into an affirmative reply, but he affected not to notice the evasion, and exclaimed—

“ Tell me frankly, Herr Rovsing, have you *any* recollection of having seen me before ?”

The painter involuntarily drew himself to his full height, and returning the penetrating gaze of Vinterdalen, he answered promptly, and in a firm, ingenuous tone—

“ I would reply explicitly, if I could, but I cannot. Nevertheless, I have a vague and subtle impression that, as you yourself appear to suppose, I knew you when I was young—very young.”

“ And my voice ! is there aught in its tones familiar to you ?”

“ Yes, I do, indeed, fancy so,” very gravely replied Bertel. “ There is something both in your look and in your voice—your voice, especially, Captain Vinterdalen—that vividly and yet undefinedly recalls to me the memories of my childhood.”

“ You cannot remember *where* you have seen me, and heard my voice ?”

“ No, on my honour I cannot !” and Bertel laid

his hand on his heart with an action both instinctive and impressive.

A singular emotion gleamed in Captain Vinterdalens eyes, and with great animation he spoke several sentences in a foreign language. Both Bertel Rovsing and Madame Vinterdalens were startled, nor did their surprise diminish when Captain Vinterdalens pointedly asked the painter, in Danish, if he understood what had just been spoken in another tongue?

"No, I do not."

"But surely you know in what language I spake?"

"I believe it was Spanish."

"It was. And do you not know Spanish?"

"Not a word."

"Have you no recollection of that language having been taught you in your childhood?"

"No," replied Bertel, with an air of undisguised astonishment at the question.

Captain Vinterdalens sighed deeply, yet it were difficult to say whether his sigh was one of relief or disappointment.

Then he resumed his interrogatories.

"You spent, as you say, many of your earlier years in Jutland. Do you remember your nurse?"

"My nurse?" and Bertel started with increased surprise. "Yes, I can just remember her."

"Was she a Jutlander?"

"Indeed I do not know. She might be; or she might not."

"Was she not a Jutland gipsy?"

"A gipsy! That is not probable, but I do not know. I have only a very faint recollection of her."

"Don't you remember a gigantic black man—a negro, born in our Danish West India Island of St. Thomas—as one familiar to you in infancy?"

Bertel Rovsing mused awhile, evidently trying hard to recall the memories of his childhood, but he at length shook his head in a decided negative.

"One question more, Herr Rovsing, Had you a sister—one older than yourself?"

"No."

"A brother?"

"No, Captain Vinterdalen; I believe I was an only child."

To all the latter interrogations the young painter had replied without reserve, evidently speaking truthfully to the best of his recollection, yet not without a certain degree of painful embarrassment. Captain Vinterdalen keenly noticed this, and whatever secret conclusions he might deduce, he did not permit any outward indication to appear.

"Pardon me, Herr Rovsing!" cried he, with an air of genuine frankness, "for having, stranger as I am, questioned you so closely in what you may not

unreasonably deem a somewhat impertinent manner, but I really imagined I had known you when you were a child. Believe me when I say that it was no impulse of vulgar curiosity which induced me to question you as I have done."

"Oh, Captain Vinterdalen!" warmly cried Bertel, "I am sure it was not. *I feel* that it was not."

"You feel rightly and instinctively!" emphatically rejoined the captain. "Who knows, Herr Rovsing," cordially added he, "whether we shall not, by-and-by, mutually be able to satisfactorily trace our individual impressions of having known each other long ago, to their real source? My wife spoke to me about you when I returned home from my former voyage, but I had not the pleasure to see you personally at that time, and now that we have at length unexpectedly met, I hope we shall become friends."

Bertel bowed, and with unaffected emotion hastily exclaimed—

"I have very few friends, indeed, Captain Vinterdalen, but I feel that I should be happy to add you to the number. I am only a poor struggling artist, and I stand nearly alone in the world. Madame Vinterdalen," continued he, in a tremulous tone, "has been a kind, an exceedingly kind and good friend unto me, and my heart will cease to beat ere I forget her

generous sympathy, and her many acts of warm-hearted friendship.

"God bless you, my own dear wife!" murmured Captain Vinterdalen, turning to Amalia, with a fond approving smile; "this is like you."

"Yes," cried Bertel in a broken voice, that testified his deep sincerity, "Madame Vinterdalen has nobly bound me to her by ties of gratitude; and I am very thankful that I can now say so in the presence of her husband. It may never be in my power to testify my devotion to her, and to hers; but if the hour ever should come, then, Captain Vinterdalen, the poor painter will not be found wanting."

"From my soul I believe you!" fervently exclaimed Captain Vinterdalen, and seizing Bertel's hand he wrung it warmly. "Henceforth reckon me as your friend, Herr Rovsing—as well as my wife!"

"I will!" ejaculated the painter, and he tried to return the kind, beaming gaze of Captain Vinterdalen, but tears fairly blinded his vision.

The Captain thoroughly appreciated the proud, yet exceedingly sensitive and genial nature of the young painter, and exchanged a glance with his wife, whose eyes were gushing with tears. Their only child, the princely boy, was at this moment clinging to the side of Bertel, whose left hand rested caressingly on his head, and he looked up with a wondering, yet in-

telligent gaze, alternately at the face of his father and that of Bertel.

"I see," said Captain Vinterdalen, "that you have another friend in the family, Herr Rovsing! Our little Wilhelm seems to be no stranger to you. Do you love Herr Rovsing, Wilhelm?"

"Ja, min kjære fader! meget! ja! ja!" eagerly cried little Wilhelm, and thereupon the painter snatched him up, and held him to his heart, and kissed him passionately.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE BARONESS GUNHILD KØMPERHIMMEL.

BERTEL ROVSING's melancholy, the offspring of disappointments and trials, and of hope deferred, was only temporarily checked by his visit to King's Cairn, and his singular interview there with Captain Vinterdalen. The ensuing day he brooded much over the questions of Vinterdalen and the vague ideas they excited; but although he racked his brain for images and memories of his childhood, he could neither recollect any thing explicatory of Vinterdalen's allusions, nor could he remember when or where (if ever) he had seen the Captain before. This mental research had the unhappy effect of recalling too vividly to mind his childish sorrows, and the distresses and miseries of his youth and early manhood, and the consequence was that they speedily re-acted on his morbidly sensitive temperament, and once more he became a supremely miserable man. When these

dark fits of mental anguish came over him he shrank from all contact with his fellow beings, and, secluded and solitary, tortured himself with vivid reminiscences of every sorrow and trial he had experienced, every folly and sin he had committed, and with the wildest and most fearful anticipations of what the future might have in store. He wilfully shrouded his soul in thick darkness, and no spark of hope, no gleam of heavenly light could penetrate the self-woven web of misery and despair. His anguish was heightened by the ever-present consciousness that he was wicked and ungrateful towards both God and man by thus nourishing the hell-born vipers which gnawed his heart. Either normally, or as the result of long years of sinful indulgence in dark thoughts and wretched broodings o'er his unhappy lot, his intellect had undoubtedly become to some extent clouded, and his brain diseased, yet ever and anon the noble nature of the man burst the bonds of mental thraldom, and triumphed glowingly over every Satanic impulse and influence. On the present occasion he struggled in vain against the evil spirit which enthralled him, and at length yielded inertly to its fiendish power, as though he felt that his good angel had for a time utterly abandoned him. He thought of the scene of conjugal happiness he had witnessed at the Cairn, and how hopeless it was for him to

indulge in the idea that he, too, might in time become as happy a husband and proud a father as Vinterdalen. He almost cursed the hour when he first met Olufina, and bitterly bewailed his hapless fate and her own.

“Why did I win her love?—why link her destiny with mine?” moaned he. “She was happy as the lark which carols amid the sunlit clouds floating above the summer’s mead, ere she saw me. I knew that inexplicable curse was upon me. I knew my mysterious Destiny forbade me ever to expect happiness on earth—and yet I selfishly bound up her life with mine. She must now share my misery—share my fate. Knowing what the past has been, I can dimly conjecture what the future must and will be. Woe is me! Why was I born?—why do I live?—Do I fear death? Why should I fear him? Can he be more cruel unto me than life?”

His wretchedness only increased with the flight of time. The morning of the third day subsequent to Captain Vinterdalen’s return, he was half-maddened with self-inflicted misery. Life itself had now grown hateful to him, and a morbid desire to seek refuge in the coward’s last resource gnawed his very soul. Thus he sat, a picture of inert, wicked despair, when roused by a loud knocking at the door. He heeded it not, until it was again and again renewed, and then, with an imprecation, he arose, and dashing

back the bolts, threw the door wide open with a stamp of the foot, and a bitter reckless sneer on his lips. To his surprise he beheld a servant, attending a richly-dressed lady, who stepped forward, and in a few words informed him that whilst passing through the town she had casually learnt that a painter of talent resided in the old castle, and she had therefore called to request to be favoured with a view of his pictures —adding that she might possibly become a purchaser.

The young man seemed bewildered by this address, Never before had any individual above the middle class crossed his threshold, but the present visitor was evidently of rank. Indeed, she was the Baroness Gunhild Kœmperhimmel, wife of a nobleman distinguished for his liberal and discriminating patronage of native artists, and it was probably the amiable desire of giving pleasure to her lord by introducing to his notice the young painter of Svendborg Castle, that had induced her to make this visit. Bertel stammered a few words of assent, and the Baroness, ordering her servant to remain without, entered the studio.

“Ah, what a romantic old studio you have!” exclaimed she, casting a quick searching glance around. The Baroness was an exceedingly noble-looking woman, apparently about the age of five and thirty,

and there was something peculiarly winning in her bearing, and in the sweet accents of her voice.

"It is both my studio and my home, madame," bitterly answered the young painter; "and I probably shall never have a better until I get my six feet of earth!"

The lady started at this strange speech, and cast a scrutinizing glance at the painter. She seemed to divine his character, intuitively, and gently answered—

"No one can tell what the future may bring forth."

"Twill bring forth nothing but misery for me!"

"It is wrong, sir, to say that," gravely replied she. "I myself had once more reason to say so than you."

"Impossible, madame!"

"You know not what you say, sir. But permit me to examine your works."

She paused before a cartoon, and made a few brief remarks which evidenced that she well understood the principles of art.

"Ah," said she, passing on to a wild conception on a large sheet of canvass, "there is genius in this—although misdirected. But what have we here? A lovely face! An ideal?"

"No, madame, it is from life, but the lady never sat for it."

"So: she must have deeply impressed your fancy?" and the Baroness Gunhild glanced keenly at the young man.

Bertel blushed, bowed, and remained silent. It was a portrait of Olufina.

One after another the visitor examined each of the many paintings, nearly all of which were more or less unfinished, and she made observations, sometimes disapproving, sometimes warmly admiring and praising, but every word thrilled the heart of the painter, for he felt that he listened, almost for the first time, to one who was capable of delivering sound judgment, and who spoke freely and sincerely.

"Pardon me, sir," said the Baroness, somewhat abruptly; "but are your parents living?"

"No, madame, I am a friendless orphan."

"Ah, I also have been both an orphan and friendless; yet I ever had a Father and a Friend in Heaven!"

The painter gazed at her as her eyes filled with tears, with a feeling of inexplicable sympathy.

The lady at this moment perceived the little domestic scene which Bertel had himself destroyed in his frenzy on the night of the storm. She gently drew the fractured portions of canvas to their proper positions without any interference on the part of

Bertel, and then she thoughtfully examined the irreparably damaged painting.

“This *was* a gem,” said she, “and I know one who would have given ample value for it, had it not been thus ruined. How did this accident happen?”

The inquiry was too much for Bertel. All his misery passed in review, and with a groan, he burst into tears.

“Sit down, my young friend,” said the Baroness, in a soothing voice, and she gently forced him to obey her, whilst she seated herself by his side. She felt singularly attracted by the manner of the painter, and determined to learn his history. With the tact of an accomplished and kindly woman, she speedily drew from him the story of his life, since his arrival at Svendborg, for he declined to speak at all of his career prior to that epoch. His toils, his struggles, his love for Olufina, his poverty, his despair, all were revealed.

When he grew more composed the Baroness seriously spoke a few words to him, which caused his heart to swell and his eyes to flash. She appreciated his genius—she sympathized with his unrewarded toils—she would gain for him powerful patrons, and he should yet be happy!

“But what hidden picture is that?” and the Baroness pointed to a recess in the dense old wall, where

the lower portion of a painting protruded from beneath a faded curtain of green silk.

"You shall see it, madame," and he promptly drew aside the curtain.

The painting revealed was beautifully executed, and represented a simple, yet touching scene. There was a wintry landscape and a snow-covered highway, on which stood an aged, blind man, with a young girl by his side. A little boy was offering a cake to the old man, who was represented in the act of laying his withered hand on the child's head, as though blessing him.

Hardly had the Baroness glanced at this, ere she started, became very pale, and gazed at it with absorbing emotion. The painter was amazed, and yet more so, when she exclaimed in a voice of extreme agitation—

"In the name of Heaven! sir, tell me what prompted you to paint that picture?"

"Madame!"

"Tell me, sir, is it a mere fancy of your brain, or can it be possible you ever beheld such a scene?"

"It is from life, madame—or rather, I ought to say from memory."

"From memory! How so?"

"I will tell you. Twenty-one years ago a happy child rambled one Christmas day some miles along

the road leading from Randers to Viborg, in Jutland. That child was myself. I was then about four years of age. I met with an aged blind man, accompanied by a young girl, and both were in extreme distress. I heard them converse, and I understood that they even lacked bread. I had a cake—ah, madame, you are ill?"

"Go on, sir," ejaculated the Baroness Gunhild, with a great effort.

"Well, madame, I offered my little cake to the old man, and he accepted it, and blessed me. I cannot remember his words, but I know that he blessed me. The incident made such an impression, that, young as I was, I never forgot it, and I recently painted this picture to preserve it green in my memory. The figures are represented as nearly like what I can remember as my art could compass."

"That picture," cried the Baroness with vehemence, while the tears streamed down her cheeks, "is mine, and a thousand dalers are yours!"

"Oh, madame!" stammered Bertel.

"Listen, sir!" and she tightly grasped the arm of the astonished painter. "You tell me that the aged pilgrim blessed you, but his words you do not remember. I do! He said you had that day cast your bread upon the waters, and he prayed the Almighty that after many days it might return to you

again. It has returned to you on this day, after one-and-twenty years have sped, for God has directed me here to fulfil the promise of his Holy word. Know, young man, that I was the girl, and that the aged man was my grandfather—or, as I have now reason to believe, one who only assumed that relationship. I was then a poor orphan—I am now the wife of a nobleman. Your fortune and your happiness are henceforth my care!"

"O, madame!—my God, what is it I hear?"

"Words of truth, young man: a promise which shall be sacredly fulfilled as surely as I live."

"O, O!" cried the agitated painter, clasping his hands together with a great sob, "and this happiness is vouchsafed me at the very moment when I madly imagined that God himself had forsaken me, and when I wickedly arraigned His infinite justice, His all-embracing providence, and was almost tempted to impiously rush unbidden to His awful presence!"

"Ah," said the Baroness, tenderly, yet solemnly, "surely thou never will again mistrust the sleepless providence of thy Creator, nor arraign His sovereign wisdom in the inscrutable disposition of events? Heaven and earth shall sooner pass away than that one jot or tittle of God Almighty's sacred promises should fail of ultimate realization."

"I see!—I believe!" ejaculated Bertel. "And,

oh! never more will I murmur against my Maker's will, nor yield to a sinful retrospect of the past, and yet more sinful forebodings of the future!"

"Amen!" fervently cried the Baroness. "We must not part at present. Compose yourself, my dear young friend, and come with me."

"To the end of the world, if you wish it, madame!" enthusiastically exclaimed the impressionable painter —ever (true child of genius!) constitutionally prone to extremes of evil or good, sorrow or joy, grovelling despair, or ecstatic hope.

## CHAPTER XI.

## A COLLOQUY AT KING'S CAIRN.

"O, I am so thankful, Vinterdalen, that you had not to bring your ship to a Baltic port this voyage!"

So spake Amalia Vinterdalen to her husband, as they sat together in their luxurious little parlour, which was carpeted and otherwise furnished in the English fashion, in deference to the acquired tastes of the Captain. The long gloaming of a Danish autumn evening had at length died away, and a cold rising wind eddied around the exposed villa, but it only increased the feeling of comfort experienced in the brilliantly-lighted and closely-shuttered room.

This was the third evening since Captain Vinterdalen had returned home, and hitherto he had not once quitted the Cairn, avowing that he was much too happy in the society of his wife and boy to care to 'go an inch beyond the shadow of his dwelling. The only visitor to the household during this period

had been Mads Nielsen, who came regularly in the morning and evening of each day, with an offering of fresh-caught fish, and was invariably welcomed and hospitably entertained by Captain Vinterdalen.

“So thankful! Why?”

“O, because that terrible Rover, Lars Vonved, has been frightfully active of late.”

“Ay?”

“Yes; have you not heard that he still pursues his wicked career? and his very name strikes terror in the breasts of our honest seafaring countrymen. His last exploit—the explosion of the Falk—surely you have heard of that?”

“I have read about it in *Fœdrelandet*.”

“Is it not indescribably awful? O, what a demon, what an incarnate fiend that Vonved must be!”

“Do you really think so, *Amalia*?”

“Think so! ah yes! and everybody thinks and says so. Don’t you?”

“Not precisely,” replied Captain Vinterdalen, with a curious smile. “It is not charitable to believe all the evil attributed by rumour to any living being.”

“Why, Vinterdalen,” cried his wife, “I do declare you are almost as provokingly sceptical as Mads Nielsen! Mads actually pretends that he does not even believe that Vonved is a corsair at all!”

"Mads is a remarkably sensible fellow. I am myself very much of his opinion."

"O, come, Vinterdalen, you should not jest on such a horrible subject. What would become of you were Vonved to capture your ship as he has done so many others?"

"I am not afraid that such a calamity will ever befall me."

"Who knows? You may have to navigate the Baltic by-and-by, and if that merciless Rover should board you"—

"We shall clink glasses together, and drink to a longer acquaintance."

"O me! how can you laugh and chuckle at such a dreadful idea?"

"Why not, Amalia? Do you think Lars Vonved would refuse to pledge an honest mariner?"

"He pledge! They say he scuttles every ship he seizes, after making the crew walk the plank!"

"They say that, do they? And who are *they*?"

"Why, the newspapers, and the people, and—everybody!"

"Everybody but Mads Neilsen, eh?"

"Yes, indeed!"

"Why, then, this terrible Lars Vonved must be very little better than a pirate?"

"Pouf! you know well enough that he is the most

atrocious pirate, corsair, sea-monster, who ever sailed the salt seas?"

"So?"

"Yes, so, Captain Vinterdalen!"

"Don't pout, Amalia mine! By my troth, I should like to hear more about this Lars Vonved—pirate, corsair, sea-monster, as you describe him to be! What sort of a man is he? Does he resemble—myself, for example?"

"Heaven forbid! But I know nothing about his personal appearance."

"No? Well does he sail under a black flag, decorated with a death's head and cross-bones?"

"O, I know nothing about his flag—though it cannot be blacker than his heart!—but I do know that if you jest much longer in that way I shall be exceedingly angry with you. Ah, Vinterdalen," added she, tenderly, "little did I imagine what it is to be a seaman's wife when I married you! You don't know what sleepless nights I have lately passed, listening to every roar of the surf on the beach, and every howl of the wind, thinking of the danger in which you might then be in; and since I read that hideous narrative in Fœdrelandet, I have thrice awoke in the dead of the night, almost shrieking with horror, because I dreamt that you had been captured by the bloodthirsty Baltic Rover!"

Captain Vinterdalen made no immediate response, but gazed steadily at his wife, and the longer he gazed the more inexplicable grew the expression of his countenance. Fond, grateful love, painful reminiscences and misgivings, and something altogether undefinable, all were betokened by his mobile features and eloquent eyes.

He spoke after a prolonged pause.

"Amalia," said he, and there was no longer a trace of bandinage or railery in his grave tone; "do you indeed believe that this Lars Vonved is the monster popularly represented?"

"Surely I do!"

"I am sorry—very sorry for it."

"What! Do you not believe it is true that Vonved is an atrocious miscreant?"

"No."

"A corsair—a pirate?"

"No."

"An outlaw?"

"Yes."

"Nothing more?"

"Nothing worse, I hope."

"And is not that bad enough?"

"Ay, truly it is."

"Come, Vinterdalen," laughed Amalia, "I am at any rate glad you admit Vonved to be an outlaw."

“Yes, he is an outlaw, and do you not pity him?”

“Pity him? No! I pity his innocent victims a million times more.”

“His victims? Who are they?”

“I marvel you can ask such a question so gravely, Vinterdalen! Who are they? Why, the honest seamen he has murdered, the wives he has widowed, the children he has rendered orphans, the merchants he has ruined—*they* are his victims!”

Captain Vinterdalen’s eyes gleamed strangely as he listened to these passionate words of his wife, and he appeared to control with difficulty the rising emotions of his soul. Deliberately uttered was his response—calm and yet most mournful and touching were its tones.

“And so,” said he, “because Rumour attributes to Lars Vonved the commission of atrocities of which he is incapable, you, even you, a gentle, generous-minded lady, give full credence to all that is laid to his charge. Ay, without inquiry, without reflection, without examination, you hesitate not to brand Vonved as a monster, a demon, a fiend incarnate!”

“Vinterdalen!” ejaculated Amalia, “what do you mean? And why do you look at me in such a way? I only have said that of Lars Vonved which all the world says.”

“All the world!” bitterly reiterated Vinterdalen.

"All the world says that Vonved is a corsair, a pirate, a remorseless murderer, a monster who daily violates the laws of God and man! And *you* echo what the world says of him?"

"O Himlen! Vinterdalen, you frighten me with your look and your words!"

"Lars Vonved," resumed Vinterdalen, speaking in a very slow, emphatic way, and dropping his words as though each were given on solemn oath, "is neither better nor worse than myself."

"O, Vinterdalen, how can you speak such horrid nonsense?"

"It is only nonsense, if truth is nonsense. I know Lars Vonved as well as you, my wife, know me."

Madame Vinterdalen uttered an ejaculation of terror and amazement, and gazed at her husband with an expression of vague alarm, mingled with some faint lingering trace of incredulity.

"You actually know the pirate Vonved?"

"No, I do not know the pirate Vonved," said Vinterdalen, with a sad and bitter smile, "but I know the outlaw Vonved. He is an outlaw and a sea-rover, but not a corsair, not a pirate."

"What is the difference? Is not a rover a pirate?"

"No; a pirate is a rover, but it does not necessarily follow that a rover is a pirate. Some rovers are pirates, but Vonved is not one."

"And you have seen him—have spoken with him?"

"His voice is as familiar to my ears as your own, my wife."

"You speak of him as if he were even a friend?"

"He is a friend."

"A friend of yours? O, surely never!"

"Ay, a friend of mine, an old friend, a friend every event of whose life is known unto me."

"O, this is dreadful!" agitatedly exclaimed Amalia. "You are, you must be in danger yourself! O, how little did I dream of this!"

"In danger because I have confessed to my wife that I am an old friend of Lars Vonved? By my troth! do you threaten to turn traitor?"

"Are there not others besides me, who know of your friendship with him?"

"None whom I fear—not one whom I mistrust more than my wife."

"By what fatality did you become acquainted with this wicked, this miserable outlaw?"

"Our acquaintance is of a very old date. I knew him long before he was either a miserable or wicked man, or a hunted outlaw."

"And yet you have hitherto kept all this secret from me!" cried Madame Vinterdalen, reproachfully.

"It may be that it were better if I had still per-

mitted you to remain ignorant of the fact," thoughtfully responded the Captain.

"No, Vinterdalen, I do not think that. You ought not to have kept such a secret from me. I am your wife and have a right to share your confidence: you will never find me unworthy of it."

"I am sure I never shall, Amalia."

"Then tell me all about your knowledge of the history of this rover, who, whether guilty or innocent, has earned such fearful renown."

"Ah, you would indeed pity rather than condemn him—you would admit that he is more sinned against than sinning, if you only knew the true story of his life."

"Then tell it me! Not one syllable of it shall ever be repeated by me to living being, without your permission."

"You may repent having made this request, Amalia."

"No, that I shall not!"

"I would I were sure of that."

"I am sure!"

"Why?"

"Because I know—because I *feel* so!"

"A true woman's reason!" and he smiled, but his smile was mournful and abstracted.

"Come, Vinterdalen, begin! for you have excited

my curiosity to such a degree that I shall never rest until you tell me all about your friend the pirate—no, rover, I mean!—Lars Vonved.”

“Ah, it is a long story.”

“So much the better! for we have a long night before us, and we shall not be disturbed, for Wilhelm has thoroughly tired himself with play to-day, and has gone early to bed. Now, Captain Wilhelm Vinterdalen, spin your seaman’s yarn! and I’ll promise you an attentive listener.”

Madame Vinterdalen spoke with an assumed air of cheery light-heartedness, but in reality she was very much disturbed, and nervously anxious to learn the true history of the Baltic Rover, since she now was for the first time cognizant of the (to her) alarming fact that her husband was an intimate personal friend of that outlaw of terrible celebrity. Vinterdalen looked at her with a keen and thorough appreciation of what was passing in her mind, and a twitching of the corners of his lips seemed to indicate that he felt a painful degree of reluctance to tell her what he knew.

“Be it so, Amalia: be it so, my wife!” exclaimed he. “I verily little thought this night that I should relate unto thee the story of Lars Vonved; but what is said is said, and it may be the will of Heaven that what I have never yet breathed unto thee shall now be fully revealed.”

He spoke in a subdued, yet peculiarly solemn and tender tone, that vibrated to the heart's core of his wife. She shuddered, she knew not why, as she tremblingly cried—

“In the name of Heaven, then, confide all thou knowest of that man to the wife of thy bosom, Vinterdalen!”

“I will, Amalia! I will, my wife! Thou shalt know the true story of Lars Vonved—and may God incline thine heart to judge him mercifully!”

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE TRUE STORY OF LARS VONVED.

"OUR Danish monarchy," commenced Captain Vinterdalen, "is, thou knowest, one of the most ancient in Europe, and its greatest dynasty was that founded by Sven Magnus Estritson, in 1047. Sven had noble successors in Knut [Canute] and Valdemar the Great. The sixth Knut and the second Valdemar conquered great possessions on the shores of the Baltic, but King Valdemar II. was at length defeated, taken prisoner himself, and his conquests in Courland and elsewhere wrested from him by his German enemies. His native kingdom of Denmark was so shaken and weakened, that in 1241, he divided it among his sons—an unwise arrangement, which naturally led to internecine wars. At length it came to pass that"—

"What is all this you are saying, Vinterdalen?" interrupted his wife in a tone of surprise and vexation. "You promised to relate the true story of Lars

Vonved, and instead of that you begin to narrate passages from our Danish Chronicles, about the kings of the grand old race which ceased to reign long centuries ago!"

"Precisely," replied Vinterdalén, with much composure. "And unless you carefully bear in mind what I have just said, and what I shall further say of the royal line of Valdemar, be assured that you cannot understand the history of the man Lars Vonved."

"Pouf! Whatever connexion can there possibly exist between the old kings of Denmark and Lars Vonved the living rover?"

"An intimate connexion, as you will speedily comprehend, if you will only quietly listen."

"Well, it may be so. Go on, then, only pray don't tantalize me with old-world traditions any longer than you can help."

"When Olaf IV," resumed Captain Vinterdalén, "died, Margaret, a daughter of his grandfather Valdemar III., succeeded in ascending the throne in 1387, and that truly illustrious woman speedily raised Denmark to a pitch of grandeur and power it never had attained before, and probably never will again. Within one year after becoming queen regnant, she united Sweden to Denmark and Norway, having defeated the Swedes, whose king was slain in

battle against her army. In 1397, the celebrated Treaty of Calmar solemnly ratified this union of the three Scandinavian kingdoms under one imperial sceptre, but the successors of Margaret the Great had neither her genius nor her good fortune, and at length the line of Valdemar ceased to reign. The Count of Oldenburg ascended to the throne in 1488, as Christian I., and the House of Oldenburg continues to present the royal dynasty of our country. The line of Oldenburg soon lost Sweden, and"—

"Yes, yes, Vinterdalen ! I know all about the history of our Valdemar and our Oldenburg sovereigns, and their conquests and their defeats, their acquisitions and their losses," again interrupted Amalia, "but, once more, what has all this to do with Lars Vonved ?"

"I will tell you in a word, Amalia, since you are so impatient. Lars Vonved is a lineal descendant of Valdemar the Great, and he is the present legitimate head of that illustrious race of kings, princes, warriors, heroes."

"Lars Vonved ! Vonved the outlaw ! Vonved the rover !"

"The same."

"He the living head of the glorious line of Valdemar !"

"It is as true as the stars shine above us. In the

veins of Lars Vonved flows the pure unadulterated blood of the royal and once mighty line of Valdemar—Denmark's ancient kings. And," added Captain Vinterdalen, in a singularly melancholy and bitter tone, "King Frederick knows it. Ay, he who now holds the sceptre swayed for centuries by the Valdemars, knows that this outlawed subject Lars Vonved is the undoubted heir of the kingly predecessors of his own ancestors!"

"O, Himlen!" ejaculated Madame Vinterdalen, now beginning to appreciate the startling new light thus thrown on the history of the outlaw Vonved; "can it be that our king indeed knows that?"

"Ay, that does he, as well as I know it myself!"

"It ought to have inclined his heart to pity and mercy."

"Pity and mercy! Ay, you may well say so, but the fact that the Rover is of the blood of Valdemar, only steels King Frederick's heart against him."

"But how is it that the legitimate heir of the line of Valdemar bears the name of Vonved?"

"Simply thus: The brother of King Valdemar III. married a Swedish princess whose family name was Vonved. She was the only child of the renowned Sven Vonved, a prince whose memory is yet cherished in the popular traditions and minstrelsy of his country, as he was unrivalled in his age for personal

strength, valour, and generosity—manly qualities which ever render a prince the people's favourite. It was for reasons partly political, but principally for the sake of preserving to posterity the name of this great Swedish prince, arranged and solemnly stipulated at their marriage, that henceforth the family name to be borne by the eldest son (and the eldest son only) of the united race of Valdemar and Vonved, should be that of the latter. Queen Margaret the Great, a few years after she succeeded in uniting Sweden to her dominions, created her relative, the then Prince of Valdemar (who was the only living male descendant of their line and that of Vonved), Count of Elsinore, and this title, for reasons of a singular nature, was ever after the only one borne by the heirs of the race. When the Count of Oldenburg ascended the throne of Denmark in 1448, as Christian I., he was not unmindful of the proud claims of the sole surviving branch of his mighty predecessors, to be peculiarly honoured in the realm. He not only confirmed to the line the title of Count of Elsinore—a title of significance and grandeur, inasmuch as Elsinore is the key to the Baltic and all its kingdoms and powers—but he also bestowed on the count and his lineal legitimate heirs, in perpetuity, a certain portion of the revenues derivable from the Sound Dues at Elsinore, as a free gift from the crown, to

enable the representatives of the illustrious race of Valdemar to uphold the dignity of their house with becoming splendour. This generous conduct of King Christian was warmly appreciated by the line of Valdemar. Not only did they forbear from disturbing the reign either of himself or of his successors by secret or open prosecution of claims to the throne, but they ever maintained the Oldenburg dynasty, and many of their race fought, bled, and died in its support. They nevertheless were not forgetful of their royal lineage, and even unto this present day only one of the Counts of Elsinore has married beneath his rank."

"That is to say," briskly cried Amalia, "only one has married a lady *not* of royal, or at least of princely blood. Is that what you mean?"

"Yes."

"And who was that one?"

"Lars Vonved himself."

"Lars Vonved! And *he* is the present Count of Elsinore?"

"He is."

"And is that unhappy man really married?"

"Ay."

"O, how I pity his wife!"

At this natural exclamation of Amalia, an expres-

sion of intense anguish flitted athwart the countenance of Captain Vinterdalen.

"Yes," continued he; "it is indeed true that Lars Vonved is the very first of his race who has married a lady beneath the rank of a princess; but, I believe, that not one of his ancestors wedded a nobler-minded woman, or one who would, under happier auspices, have more worthily upheld her dignity as Countess of Elsinore."

"God help her," sighed Amalia; "what a fate must her's be, whoever she is!"

"You think she must necessarily be very miserable because she is the wife of Lars Vonved?"

"Miserable! Ah, me! my heart bleeds for her!" exclaimed Amalia, with deep womanly emotion.

"During the four centuries subsequent to the advent of the Oldenburg dynasty," continued Vinterdalen, "the patrimony of the Counts of Elsinore gradually grew less and less, and it was mainly expended in the cause of the royal line which succeeded that of Valdemar on the Danish throne. When Knut Vonved, the grandfather of Lars Vonved, became Count of Elsinore, on the death of his father, in 1765, the family property was almost entirely dwindled away, and little remained to uphold the dignity of the race of Valdemar but their share of the Sound Dues, which had become at least seven-

fold as much as what it was when originally granted by Christian I. Count Knut Vonved had entered the army very early in life, and in 1766, when Christian VII. ascended the throne, the Count held the rank of a general. In 1772 occurred that infamous plot of the Queen mother and her son, Prince Frederick, who contrived to persuade the half-imbecile King that his young and innocent Queen, Matilda, sister of George III. of England, was conspiring with her alleged paramour, Count Struensee, the prime minister, to dethrone her husband. Queen Matilda was thereupon seized and closely imprisoned for some months in the castle of Kronborg, at Elsinore; and she would probably have been put to death had not her brother, the English King, demanded her liberation, and backed his demand with a powerful fleet. She was then sent to Zell, in Hanover, where she died broken-hearted three years subsequently. Count Struensee and his friend, Count Brandt, were mocked by a pretended trial and barbarously executed. All Denmark knew that they were perfectly guiltless; but such was the terror inspired by the policy and power of the malignant and merciless old Queen Dowager, that hardly a voice was raised in favour of her victims. One nobleman only had the courage to chivalrously assert their innocence and indignantly demand their honourable acquittal. He stood alone;

but his was a protest of great moral force and significance, for he was the acknowledged head of the Danish nobility, and next in rank to the princes of the reigning royal family."

"He was the Count of Elsinore?"

"Yes. Knut Vonved, grandfather of Lars Vonved, was the man who thus openly braved the whole court in defence of helpless innocence!" and as he spake, Captain Vinterdalén's countenance glowed with singular pride.

"'Twas an act worthy the fearless and generous blood of Valdemar!" exclaimed Amalia, warmly.

"Ay, and when Count Vonved found his intercession and appeal disregarded, he threw his general's commission at the feet of King Christian, as he sat in full council, and drawing his sword, he snapped its blade across his knee, solemnly swearing that never more would he serve a sovereign who had dishonoured his country by such an act of hellish injustice."

"Glorious fellow! Methinks his long line of kingly ancestors would look down with approval on the representative of their race, if it were permitted unto them!"

"Yes; Knut Vonved was not a degenerate descendant of Valdemar the Great; but dearly indeed did he and his eventually suffer for the manly part he

took in defence of Queen Matilda and poor murdered Struensee and Brandt. At that time he was still in the prime of life, and his disposition was much too martial and energetic to permit him to languish in inactivity. As he had sworn never again to serve King Christian, he resolved to seek foreign service. He was the more determined to this step, because he had incurred the bitter hatred of the Queen mother, and of her son, the Crown Prince, Frederick, our present sovereign. Let me do justice to the latter. Count Knut Vonved himself believed that Prince Frederick, far from being the originator, was not even a voluntary prime mover in the infernal plot which blasted the reputation and destroyed the life of Queen Matilda. His wicked mother was the mainspring of the plot, and the young prince weakly yielded to her influence, and lent himself to aid her in her design—the object of which was to secure to him the succession to the throne. Still, making every allowance for his youth, and his mother's pernicious influence over him, he was guilty of a foul and abominable crime in becoming an active accessory to the fiendlike scheme, unless, indeed (which is certainly possible), he actually believed, on the faith of his subtle mother's representations, that Queen Matilda and Count Struensee were really guilty. Be this as it may, Count Vonved boldly taxed him to his face with complicity

in the monstrous plot, and told him that in his dying hour he would bitterly repent having thus dishonoured his family and his country. This, of course, incensed the Crown Prince against Vonved, and mutual expressions of acrimonious anger induced a violent personal quarrel ; for the proud Count of Elsinore feared the face of no man upon earth, and holding himself, by birth and descent, the equal of Prince Frederick, it was with the spirit and freedom of an equal that he spoke his mind.

“ From that hour the star of the House of Valdemar was eclipsed. Count Knut had married a Russian princess, who died five years subsequent to their union, leaving him two sons, the eldest of whom, Valdemar Vonved, was at this epoch only three, and Erik, the youngest, two years of age. Their father’s resolution was speedily taken. He made arrangements with his friend, Baron Hindstrand, to receive the children and bring them up in his own family, and then he himself offered his sword to Catherine of Russia. That sagacious Empress received him with distinguished honour, and at once gave him a high command in her armies. She was prompted to this by various motives. Count Vonved was of a far loftier royal lineage than herself ; he was a soldier of well-known ability and European renown ; he was connected with her by his marriage ; and last, though

perhaps not least in the estimation of Catherine, he was personally a magnificent and exceedingly handsome man. He served with great distinction during several campaigns against the Turks and other nations on the south-eastern frontiers of the Russian dominions, and was rapidly earning a brilliant name as a general, when a quarrel with, and the ceaseless animosity of one of the Empress's jealous favourites—*the favourite* of the day—compelled him to quit her service in disgust, although Catherine herself condescended repeatedly to request him to remain. He permanently returned to Denmark in 1783, having made almost yearly brief visits to it during the ten years of his service in Russia ; and at every visit he found ample reason to be satisfied with the guardian of his boys, for Baron Hindstrand had sacredly discharged the important trust he had undertaken.

" In 1784, the miserable King Christian was officially declared insane, and thereupon Frederick, as the Crown Prince, assumed the Regency, which he held without an interval for twenty-four years, when, at the death of Christian, he mounted the throne of the country of which he had been so long the virtual sovereign. At this time, Count Knut's eldest son, Valdemar Vonved, was fifteen years of age, and Erik was fourteen. Count Vonved himself was now a middle-aged man, and he felt that his own active

career as a soldier was terminated. The future of his sons was henceforth his chief care in life. He carefully tested their individual inclinations, and found that both were passionately desirous to embrace the profession of arms in service of their native land. Valdemar Vonved particularly wished to enter the navy, somewhat to the disappointment of his father, who would have preferred that his eldest son, and the heir to his illustrious title, should have been a soldier, like himself and so many of their ancestors. Erik, on the other hand, longed to enter the army. The question was—would the Crown Prince consent to receive the sons of Count Vonved in his service after what had passed? Long did this question occupy the mind of the Count, and many a discussion had he on the subject with his intimate friends. He even wrote to the Empress of Russia, frankly stating his dilemma, and Catherine returned him a most friendly answer, assuring him of her undiminished friendship, and stating, that if the Regent of Denmark would not give commissions to his sons she would do so, and would charge herself with their future advancement. But Count Vonved was peculiarly anxious that, if possible, his boys should at least commence life in the service of their native land; and to insure this he, after many a pang, bowed his proud spirit to solicit an audience with the

Crown Prince, whom he had never met since their angry rupture in 1772. Frederick accorded him an interview, listened coldly to his request, and declined to give an immediate reply. Within twenty-four hours, however, Count Vonved was summoned to the palace. In the interim the Crown Prince, yielding to the more generous impulses of his nature, and probably, also, materially influenced by the advice of his ministers, had resolved to receive the youths in his service as cadets in the professions they had respectively chosen. He personally announced this to Count Vonved, and said, that although past events would preclude him ever giving the Count himself a command in his army, or a seat at his council-board, yet that should not operate to the disadvantage of his sons, whom he pledged his royal word to promote according to their merit. This gracious and unlooked for promise affected the stern old general exceedingly. He answered the Crown Prince that he sought nothing for himself, as he considered his martial career ended, although he could not help adding, with pardonable pride, that were he disposed to again seek active service, there were many foreign courts which would gladly receive the offer of his sword. But his ancestors had invariably commenced life in the service of their native sovereign, and he expressed his heartfelt gratitude that his sons would also be

permitted to do so. Frederick made a suitable and not unfriendly reply, and the audience terminated. The friends of Count Vonved were now sanguine that, in course of time, a thorough reconciliation would ensue between him and the Regent; but he himself had no such expectation, nor even desire, except for the sake of his sons.

“ Valdemar Vonved was forthwith received as a midshipman in the Danish navy, and Erik entered the Royal Military College, to be educated for the army. At the expiration of a couple of years, Erik successfully passed an examination and was presented with a commission in the artillery. His subsequent promotion kept pace with his merit, as Frederick had promised, for within ten years he attained the rank of colonel. His elder brother received a lieutenant’s commission immediately after he had served the necessary length of time to qualify him for that rank, and by the close of the century he was a commodore. During this interval their father had lived in retirement, his chief happiness being derived from watching the progress of his beloved sons in their professions. He was now an old man, for in 1800 he completed his three score years and ten; and yet, notwithstanding the many hardships he had undergone during his long and active military career, he was as strong and full of vitality as many men thirty

years younger. Valdemar Vonved was now thirty-one, and Erik thirty years of age, and, according to all human probability, both of them might reasonably anticipate a long and honourable, if not a brilliant career. But it was not to be. Providence willed it otherwise, and in mercy, also, I have sometimes thought."

Here Captain Vinterdalén paused and appeared for the moment profoundly abstracted.

"Did they die prematurely?" asked his wife, who had listened with gradually-increasing interest to the singular narrative.

"Ay; if to be killed fighting in defence of their native country can properly be called a premature death."

"It is a glorious death!" warmly ejaculated Amalia; "and whoever dies in such a sacred cause should not be lamented as having lived too short a span. He who is old enough to fight for his country is not too young to die for it—nor has he died too soon!"

"Nobly said, my wife! Thou hast the heart and the spirit of a matron who may, by right divine, become mother of a race of patriot heroes!" and Captain Vinterdalén's eye kindled as he gazed at her with pride, love, and admiration—strangely dashed, however, with a tinge of melancholy and bitter remorse.

Amalia flushed brightly and proudly at this merited

encomium from the lips of him whom she loved more than all the world—for was he not the husband on whose bosom she slept, and the father of her boy?—but the next instant she sighed deeply, as she remembered how her father, Colonel Orvig, was killed fighting in defence of Copenhagen in 1807.

“ Go on, Vinterdalen ! ” exclaimed she, in an eager yet subdued tone. “ Tell me how Count Vonved’s sons fought and fell, and—yes, above all, speak about Lars Vonved ! ”

Captain Vinterdalen drew a long, quivering breath, and, as it were, roused himself from the half-pleasant half-painful abstraction and reverie into which he had temporarily fallen.

“ Ay, I will tell thee,” said he ; “ and it may be that thy true woman’s heart will throb with sympathy. It was of Valdemar Vonved and Erik that I last spake. I said that up to the year 1800, each had prospered well in his profession. In his twenty-third year Valdemar married, with the full approval of his father, the youngest daughter of Prince Otteraa.”

“ Otteraa ! Surely I have heard of him ? He was a Swedish prince ! ”

“ He was ; and in the female line, he was directly descended from the illustrious monarch, Gustavus Vasa. But the house of Otteraa is now entirely extinct. The prince in question was the last male of

the race ; and of his three daughters two died unmarried, and the youngest became the wife of Valdemar Vonved, as I have said. She brought no dower whatever to her husband, for her father had none to bestow. Count Vonved, however, was mightily pleased with the love-match of his eldest-born—for a love-match it was—his pride of race being gratified at the thought that a descendant of Sweden's mighty patriot-hero and monarch was united to the heir of the line of Valdemar of Denmark. He cared not for her poverty, proudly declaring that son his could always worthily maintain the dignity of their united race with his sword alone. One child only was born to the young couple ; and the mother died in giving him birth, on the third anniversary of her marriage day.”

“ Ah !” cried Madame Vinterdalen, with much emotion ; “ and this boy ? ”

“ Ay, this boy,” replied Vinterdalen, with mournful emphasis, “ who cost his mother her life the hour he first drew breath, they christened him Lars.”

“ Lars Vonved ? ”

“ Verily.”

“ Lars Vonved the Outlaw ! Oh, it sounds like a wild dream to me ! ”

“ Ay, Lars Vonved the Outlaw—Lars Vonved the pirate, and sea monster, as you called him—is also

Lars Vonved, Count of Elsinore, and in his veins flows the mingled blood of Valdemar the Great of Denmark and Gustavus Vasa of Sweden."

"Oh, Himlen! what accursed fatality can have driven the descendant of such mighty heroes to become an outcast felon?"

"Call him an outcast and an outlaw if thou wilt, but link not felon with his name!" austerely exclaimed Captain Vinterdalen, glancing at his wife with a sudden flash of anger and reprehension.

"O, pardon me, Vinterdalen!" cried she, deprecatingly; "I thought that"—

"Hear the true story of Lars Vonved ere thou thinkest aught of him; and, once for all, dismiss from thy mind the abominable lies which malignancy and hatred have promulgated to make the ignorant believe that Lars Vonved is a ruthless villain. He is what he is. Felon! That word ought never to have passed thy lips in connexion with *his* name!"

"It never shall again. Forgive me, dear Wilhelm, and continue the story!"

"Vinterdalen's brow and flashing eyes softened in their expression, as he resumed his narrative.

"In 1800 a serious misunderstanding occurred between Great Britain and Denmark, in consequence of the former power capturing the frigate Freya, when convoying some merchantmen said to be laden

with goods ‘contraband of war,’ or intended for the use of the French. This unhappy affair induced the English king to send an ambassador-extraordinary to Copenhagen, and he succeeded in procuring a temporary settlement of the quarrel; but Russia and Sweden took the part of Denmark, and, in conjunction with it, formed what was called the Northern Armed Neutrality; and as Great Britain had reason to fear that this confederation would eventually assist Napoleon, or openly declare in his favour, a powerful fleet was despatched to the Baltic, early in 1801, under Admirals Parker and Nelson, to act at discretion. Copenhagen, it soon became known, would be attacked; and to do the Crown Prince justice, he behaved nobly at this most trying juncture. Every possible preparation was made to defend the capital; and on the second of April ensued that tremendous conflict which the English call the Battle of the Baltic. Both the sons of Count Vonved were intrusted with important commands on this momentous occasion. Commodore Valdemar Vonved commanded a ship of the line in the inner harbour, and his brother, Colonel Erik, one of the formidable Trekoner batteries. Their father, Count Vonved, having vainly solicited a personal command, actually fought throughout that fatal day as a private volunteer on board the ship of his own son, Valdemar; and, though above

seventy years of age, not a man was there who more distinguished himself by dauntless bravery, skill, and activity. Ay, the glorious, lion-hearted veteran fought with even more than his youthful ardour, and was an inspiriting example even to the bravest of the brave who battled by his side. Our countrymen fought for Denmark, their capital, their homes, and all that they held dear, and did this in the very presence, as it were, of their families. Almost at the close of the tremendous fight Valdemar Vonved received a musket ball through his heart, and fell dead at the very feet of his father. The grey-haired veteran himself escaped uninjured; but could he have foreseen what the future would be unto him, he would have prayed that he might have died by the side of his first-born. Erik was severely wounded; but he and the Count followed Valdemar to his grave in the Oesterbrö cemetery, and saw him interred in the midst of his fellow-seamen, who fell gloriously in defence of their country.

“ It is said that the sensibilities of the aged are mercifully blunted, so that they do not feel losses and afflictions more acutely than their feebled strength can bear. Be this as it may—and, doubtless, it is so generally—Count Vonved most severely felt the loss of Valdemar, and much as he had before loved his grandson, little Lars, he now experienced a ten-

fold affection for the orphan boy. He could hardly ever bear him to be out of his sight—his whole being seemed to be wrapped up in that of the heir to his name and race. Possibly, he clung more to the child because Erik had, in one respect, grievously disappointed and offended him.”

“ How so ? ”

“ Thus. Prior to the Battle of the Baltic, Colonel Erik was stationed several years in Slesvig and Holstein, and there he either privately married or formed an illicit connexion with a foreign lady. Confused and contradictory rumours of this from time to time reached his father, who naturally was exceedingly angry, and peremptorily demanded to know the truth from his son. For some private reason, Erik either refused to comply, or prevaricated in such a manner as amounted to an evasion or refusal, and Count Vonved was so incensed that he ceased to hold communication with a son, who had, he thought, dishonoured him. Valdemar did his utmost to reconcile his father and brother, but with little avail ; and although the strong affection which had hitherto subsisted between the brothers remained undiminished, Erik did not confide the story of his secret marriage—if marriage it was—even to Valdemar. When the British fleet passed the Sound, in 1801, and Erik was recalled to aid in the defence of the capital—his

skill as an engineer and artillery officer being highly estimated—a temporary reconciliation ensued between him and his father; but after the excitement of the struggle was over, and the old Count had bewailed the death of Valdemar, he again recurred to the painful question of Erik's marriage, and whatever replies or explanations Erik made, they were not satisfactory, and father and son parted in mutual anger—Erik being ordered back again to Holstein, as chief artillery officer of that Duchy.

“ Time passed on. More than six years had elapsed since the Battle of the Baltic, and once more Denmark was destined to bear the brunt of Britain's vengeance. A second time Copenhagen was exposed to the horrors of a hostile attack; and for the second and last time Erik was recalled to serve in its defence. During three days of September, 1807, the doomed city was cruelly bombarded by the British army under Lord Cathcart, and compelled to capitulate after sustaining a frightful loss.”

“ My father died a soldier's death on its ramparts !” ejaculated Amalia, mournfully yet proudly.

“ He did. I have spoken with one who fought by the side of the brave Colonel Orvig, and saw him fall. On the same fatal day, too, Colonel Erik was mortally wounded. He was, at his own earnest request, immediately carried to the house of Count Vonved,

which was situated in Rosenborg Gade, just within the Nørrebrø Port. ‘Father,’ cried he, ‘I have done my duty! I have fought my last fight! I am come home to die!’ ‘My son! O, my son!’ cried the aged soldier, ‘must thou, too, die before me? Shall I not have one child left to close my eyes?’ ‘It is God’s will, my father, and thou shouldst not repine. I die a death which thou has often taught me to look forward to as the most glorious of all—I lay down my life for my country!’ ‘It is true, my son! but oh, why did death spare me in an hundred fights, and leave me a worn-out veteran, whilst Valdemar was slain in his first battle, and thou art cut off in thy second.’ ‘I have lived long enough, my father! and ere sunset I shall rejoin my brother Valdemar, and he will greet poor Erik, for I have not disgraced our lineage. But, father, forgive me, and bless me ere I die.’ ‘I do forgive thee, Erik! I do forgive and bless thee, my dear son!’ sobbed Count Vonved, embracing the dying warrior. ‘I am going fast,’ whispered Erik; ‘let me talk to thee alone, my father.’ Father and son were left alone, and what passed between them was known only to the survivor. One hour subsequently, Count Vonved was found by his servant sitting at the head of the couch in an attitude of stony despair, clasping his dead son in his withered arms, and utterly unconscious of the horrors of the

bombardment in his immediate vicinity, although the adjoining apartment had just been shattered by the explosion of a shell."

"Erik confessed the truth regarding his reputed marriage, to his father, with his last breath?"

"He undoubtedly did."

"And," continued Madame Vinterdalen, with strong interest, "had Erik really contracted a secret marriage?"

"I cannot positively tell. Count Vonved rigidly kept the secret confided to him by his dying son, whatever that secret might be, but his friends well knew that not only was his stern heart softened by the death of Erik, but that he proudly and thankfully acknowledged that Erik had not disgraced him in the manner he had so long suspected and feared. Moreover, he employed confidential agents in a mission of inquiry and search for the foreign lady and her children, his object being, it was supposed, to acknowledge and adopt the latter. No trace of them could be discovered, and the mystery of their disappearance was an additional shock and grief to Count Vonved."

"Ah, then, rely on it poor Erik was really married to their mother, or the grand old Count would not have wished to openly acknowledge his grandchildren."

"I hope so, and I believe in my heart that you

are right. Much would I give to know the full truth, and to trace those children and their mother!"

Captain Vinterdalen spoke with so much earnestness and deep feeling, that his wife was surprised at the emotion he manifested.

"Why, Vinterdalen, you talk as though you were yourself of near kin to the Valdemars! You could not have known Erik, for you must have been a child when he died?"

"Ay, only a child."

"Then how is it you speak of these secret family matters so familiarly, and with such profound personal interest?"

"Have I not told you that Lars Vonved never had a secret that I did not share?" replied Captain Vinterdalen, with the same peculiar gleam in his eyes, and inexplicable expression of countenance which he wore when he first commenced his narrative. "All that Lars Vonved knows of his family, I know."

"Then," quickly rejoined Amalia, "does your friend Lars Vonved know more concerning Erik and his reputed wife and offspring than you have just told me?"

"He does."

"Ah! I thought as much! Then of course you know it also?"

"I do."

"Tell it me—tell me all!"

"Nay, Amalia, I have already told thee more than I had intended."

"Pouf! you have merely whetted my curiosity."

"I may not reveal more."

"Say, rather, that you will not."

"As you please," calmly replied he.

"What!" cried Amalia, with a coaxing smile, "will you not tell your own wife?"

"No, I will not tell my own wife any more concerning Erik and his secret marriage. I only promised to tell you the true story of Lars Vonved—not that of his uncle Erik. Perhaps, indeed, at some future day"—

"Oh! well, never mind!" pouted Amalia; and, woman-like, she at that moment secretly avowed that the "future day," so vaguely alluded to, should in reality be very early indeed, if all her wifely wiles were of any avail. "Continue your story of Lars Vonved, which is certainly the main thing!"

"After the death of Erik," resumed her husband, "Count Vonved's affection for his grandson Lars became yet more concentrated and absorbing. The boy was the chief link which held him to life, for Lars was now the last of the race of Valdemar. The Count had him educated by various masters in his own house, and he talked with greater pride of any

boyish feat, either of an intellectual or physical kind, performed by Lars, than he did of his own great services and exploits as a general; and this was the more remarkable, inasmuch as aged men are almost invariably garrulous concerning their deeds of prowess performed in the vigour of manhood.

"In March 1808, King Christian VII. died, and the Crown Prince, who had ruled Denmark for the past twenty-four years, ascended the throne as Frederick VI. The previous month Denmark and Russia had declared war with Sweden, because Gustavus had entered into alliance with England, and Sweden soon afterwards attempted the conquest of Norway, but was repulsed. Count Vonved, excited by old reminiscences, old friendships, and above all, probably, by the fact that the mother of young Lars was a descendant of Gustavus Vasa, unhappily was excited to make a vigorous effort to induce the grand council of his country to avoid, or at least to postpone, this fratricidal war with Sweden, and several of his ancient friends, men of high rank and influence, joined him. King Frederick took mortal umbrage at this interference of Count Vonved, and their former quarrel, which had slumbered so many years, was bitterly renewed. Count Vonved, old as he was, retained so much of his characteristic fiery pride that he vowed to quit his country and never to return whilst the

war with Sweden lasted. He actually sailed forthwith to France, a country which he had not visited since his youth, taking his grandson and a few favourite old followers with him. The vessel, however, was captured by a British cruiser, and the crew and passengers were conveyed to England as prisoners of war. The Count was very kindly treated, parole being immediately granted him to reside in any part of England during his detention, and his attendants were permitted to continue with him, on his bare pledge for their good conduct. These indulgences were very unusual, for so great was the mutual exasperation of Britain and Denmark at that period, that prisoners of war were generally subjected to great severity in both countries. Count Vonved, however, had a powerful friend at the English court; and his age, misfortunes, and distinguished rank and renown, entitled him to profound respect. His detention was advantageous to his grandson, for London offered unrivalled facilities for the education of Lars, who rapidly acquired a thorough mastery of the English language.

“In December, 1810, Charles XIII., the new King of Sweden (his predecessor, Gustavus IV., having been deposed) made peace with Denmark, and no sooner did Count Vonved receive tidings of that, than (his vow being accomplished) his heart

yearned to return to his native land, to spend the brief remainder of his span at the spot where he first drew breath. Although Count Vonved was more than four-score, he still retained his bodily strength to an amazing degree, and his mental faculties were very little impaired. He now eagerly made interest to get exchanged; and his longing desire was quickly gratified, for early in January, 1811, he and his grandson and their servants, were sent back to Denmark in a ‘cartel.’ Young Lars was by no means enthusiastic at the idea of returning to Denmark, for he had intensely enjoyed his ‘captivity’ of twenty months in England, and the mighty and brilliant metropolis of that country was to him a much more fascinating city than his native Copenhagen.” .

“How old was Lars Vonved then?” curiously inquired Madame Vinterdalén.

“He was born in January, 1795, and therefore his age at that time would be just sixteen.”

“Born in January, ’ninety five? Why, then he must be almost precisely the same age as yourself?”

Captain Vinterdalén gave a quick penetrative glance at his wife, assented to her remark, and continued his narrative.

“As soon as Count Vonved had once more settled at Copenhagen, he was plunged into fresh perplexity

and trouble. He had, in imagination, devoted his grandson, heir, and sole representative of his kingly race, to the military profession, of which he himself, and all his illustrious ancestors, had been distinguished members; and inasmuch as he had been grievously disappointed when his son Valdemar obstinately resolved to enter the navy, he flattered himself that Valdemar's only child, Lars, would make amends by becoming a soldier. Alas! for the fond wise schemes of hoary eld! Young Lars not merely resembled his dead father in person, but his predilections were similar. The sea was his passion, and much as he loved the glorious old man who had been to him both father and grandfather, he could not conquer his distaste for the life of a soldier, nor subdue his subtle ardent longing for the life of a sailor. The inevitable result was, that, after many a sad struggle and melancholy misgiving, Count Vonved yielded to the innate impulses of his grandson, and consented that he should enter the navy. But what navy? Frederick the Crown Prince had only received Valdemar, the father of Lars, into his navy as a royal favour; but would Frederick the King consent for Lars to enter his service after the recent bitter renewal of his ancient, and now irreconcilable quarrel with Count Vonved? The question must be quickly decided, for Lars was already older than cadets usually are when they enter

the naval service. Count Vonved nevertheless knew that he had ample interest to get his grandson immediately received in the navy of Russia, and had peace then prevailed between Denmark and England, he could readily have procured Lars a midshipman's berth in a man-of-war of the latter mighty naval power. Still his old heart beat true to its rooted natural loyal instincts, and personal enemy as the King of Denmark was to himself, he once more bowed his proud spirit to request Frederick to receive Lars in his navy, even as he had solicited the same favour for the father of Lars nearly thirty years previously."

"And did King Frederick grant the prayer?"

"He did."

"That was magnanimous!"

"In one sense it certainly was, as regarded his personal hostility towards Count Vonved; but on the other hand it must be borne in mind that within the last ten years the father and the uncle of young Lars had both died in defence of the capital; that Count Vonved had served his country with honour and renown in a former generation; and that young Lars was the very last branch of the grand and mighty old tree of Valdemar, which for many centuries had borne fruit for Denmark in the shape of kings, warriors, patriots, heroes. Rely that these potent con-

siderations alone induced King Frederick to overcome his repugnance to the family of Count Vonved, when he consented to receive Lars in his naval service."

"And so Lars actually began life in the Royal Navy?"

"Ay, and proudly did his young heart throb when he first trod the quarter-deck of the old two-decker 'Herkules,' one of the very few ships which the English had left King Frederick, to form the nucleus of a fleet to replace that which they had taken away in 1807."

"I thought that the British admiral, Gambier, had taken away with him every man-of-war Denmark possessed at the time?"

"Ay, I myself saw the British sail through the Sound with our surrendered fleet. I counted eighteen ships of the line, fifteen frigates, six brigs, and twenty-five gun-boats, all of which now bore the English flag instead of our Danish national cross. The Leopards of the Sea had at length humiliated us to the uttermost, and a very complete haul did they make of their prey. The lines of the Scottish poet, Walter Scott, are literally true—

"A royal city, tower, and spire,  
Redden'd the midnight skies with fire,  
And shouting crews her navy bore,  
Triumphant to the victor shore."

"But they left us the 'Herkules,' it seems?"

“For a sufficient reason. The old craft was deemed unseaworthy, and they had not time to patch her up sufficiently to enable her to be navigated to England. After their departure, she was repaired and re-fitted with all despatch, and an admiral hoisted his flag on board of her, for the government had no better vessel to give him for his flag-ship. But when Lars Vonved was received on board of the ‘Herkules,’ she was no longer a flag-ship, but was employed as a cruiser in the Skaggerack and the Belts, and although she bore the notorious reputation of being the oldest, the ugliest, the slowest, and the most unhandy two-decker afloat, she nevertheless somehow managed to pick up an extraordinary number of English merchantmen, and twice she sustained gallant and bloody actions with English liners of superior rate, and fairly beat them off—which proves that the race is not always won by the swift nor the battle by the strong. Lars Vonved acquitted himself so well in both actions, that he was each time mentioned with warm praise in the official report of his captain.”

“How proud he would be!”

“His grandfather was yet prouder!” replied Captain Vinterdalen, with a mournful smile, and an involuntary gesture, as though he with difficulty repressed some secret emotion evoked by the reminiscence.

"And how long did young Vonved continue in the navy?"

"The 'Herkules' was his only ship, and you will soon learn the terrible event that terminated his career in the profession to which he was so enthusiastically attached, in which he fondly hoped to attain high renown.

"Bernadotte, the celebrated French marshal, had been elected Crown Prince of Sweden in 1810, and he speedily became the virtual ruler of his adopted country. At his instigation, Sweden declared war against Great Britain in November of the same year, but when the French seized Swedish Pomerania in 1812, Sweden hastened to make peace with the English, and Bernadotte engaged to actively prosecute hostilities against his late master, the great Napoleon, on receiving a secret pledge from the allies that Norway should be separated from Denmark and given to Sweden as a sort of compensation for the loss of Finland by the latter in 1809. In other words, because Russia had robbed Sweden of Finland, Sweden now was to rob Denmark of Norway! This iniquitous scheme was probably originally suggested by Russia, in order to pacify Sweden for the loss of Finland, and as Sweden was too weak to compel Russia to restore that ill-gotten prize, she eagerly assented to the proposal of robbing her nearest and

weakest neighbour in turn. At this period, King Frederick was negotiating a peace with England, but did not succeed, and Denmark, in July 1813, resumed her close alliance with France, and declared war anew against Sweden, and also against Russia and Prussia—both of which powers insisted on the surrender of Norway to Sweden. Bernadotte soon mastered Holstein and Slesvig, and Napoleon being already driven to bay within his own frontiers, could not aid his northern ally. The result was that Denmark was compelled to sign a disastrous peace at Kiel, whereby she gave up Norway to Sweden, merely receiving the paltry province of Swedish Pomerania, and the renunciation of some pecuniary claims, in exchange for a kingdom. Danes and Norwegians alike bitterly bemoaned this humiliating surrender, and the latter even vainly took up arms, under the Prince of Holstein, to resist incorporation with Sweden.

"The very foremost of the Danish nobles who protested against the annexation of Norway to Sweden was the now very aged Count Vonved. He headed a powerful army who insisted that Denmark would be for ever dishonoured if her king gave up Norway, which had been an integral portion of the Danish dominions for four centuries. Their opposition was in vain, and indeed the Danish government

could not possibly avoid yielding to the grasping demand of their enemies, and were absolutely compelled to make peace by the sacrifice of Norway. But King Frederick, already dreadfully irritated by the humiliation of his kingdom, and its dismemberment, was stung to the quick by the indignant and daring protest of the Count of Elsinore, which he erroneously attributed as much to personal spite as to patriotism. The fire of his ancient quarrel with the Count, which had never been extinguished, now burst forth into a flame, and was fed by the recollection that Count Vonved had been a determined opponent of the declaration of war with Sweden in 1808. The incensed monarch this time resolved to utterly crush the man whom, all his life, he had both hated and feared. He caused Count Vonved to be suddenly arrested on a charge of high treason, and kept him closely confined as a State-prisoner in Citadellet Frederikshavn, until charges could be prepared, and arrangements made for his trial—if trial it could be called."

"And where was young Lars Vonved at that time?"

"Far away. His ship was on a cruise to Iceland and the Danish settlements on the coast of Greenland. Had he known at the time what had befallen his beloved and revered grandsire, his proud young heart would have burst, or he would have gone mad. The

friends of Count Vonved—for he yet had some powerful and devoted friends—were no less indignant than alarmed at his imprisonment on such a monstrous accusation. They attempted to interpose on his behalf, but the king only became the more irritated and fixed in his purpose, nor did he fail to hint to them that they had better attend to their own safety. He also intimated that it would have been well had Count Vonved shared, in 1772, the fate of Counts Struensee and Brandt, whom he had so chivalrously defended, as well as Queen Matilda. And perhaps it would," added Captain Vinterdalen, in a strange voice, after a musing pause; "for although his life thereafter was one of brilliant renown, yet had he, too, been legally murdered even as his queen, and Counts Struensee and Brandt were murdered, he would have been spared the inexpressibly maddening blow which befel him when his age far exceeded the span prescribed by the inspired Psalmist. But God only knoweth what is best, and what is right and what is wrong, for man does not and never can."

"What, then, was the fate of Count Vonved?" asked Amalia, in a tone of sorrowful sympathy and awe.

Captain Vinterdalen's features sharply contracted, and a sort of spasm passed over them, whilst his flashing eyes and dilated nostrils betokened the

emotions of his soul. Yet his voice was calm and measured as ever when he replied :

“ They impeached him, after a long imprisonment —impeached the heroic old soldier, whose honour was as bright and unstained as his sword—impeached the descendant and representative of Denmark’s ancient kings—impeached the noble-minded, unselfish patriot, whose first thought had ever been for his country, and his last for himself—impeached Knut Vonved, Count of Elsinore, at the age of eighty-five, on the charge of high treason ! ”

“ And the result ? ” breathlessly demanded Amalia.

“ The result was, that the creatures of the court succeeded by desperate and unscrupulous exertions in obtaining his condemnation, although even they felt at their hearts’ core that a more hellishly unjust verdict never was pronounced. Count Vonved was attainted of high treason, his property, rights, privileges, and heritages, of every description, were declared forfeited, and he was sentenced to die a traitor’s death on the scaffold.”

“ O, Himlen ! and did King Frederick authorize the execution of that grand old man ? ”

“ He dared not ! There are limits to the vengeance even of a despot. All Denmark thrilled with horror and burning shame and indignation when the sentence on the glorious old Count of Elsinore was

promulgated, and the king hastened to mitigate it. He confirmed the attainder and forfeiture, but, by an act of 'royal mercy,' he spared the life he dared not take, and contented himself by a decree of banishment from the kingdom. Ay, at the age of eighty-five, Knut Vonved, accompanied by one old and devoted servitor, was cast forth from the country which his ancestors had ruled for many centuries, and for which his more immediate progenitors, and himself, his sons, and his grandson, had fought and bled, and some of them had died to defend. In his extreme old age he was ignominiously banished, and forbidden to return under penalty of death."

"The great-hearted, majestic old hero! Could he survive *that?*"

"Thou may'st well ask the question, my wife; but he did survive it, and he does survive it."

"Does?"

"Ay."

"What! Do you really say that the Count of Elsinore yet lives?"

"Lars Vonved is the Count of Elsinore."

"Then, his grandsire cannot be living?"

"You forget the attainder of that grandsire. A noble loses his title and dignities when attainted; but although his property and heritages are forfeited, his heir, in an exceptional case, may succeed to the

title. No sooner was Knut Vonved attainted of high treason than his grandson, Lars, legally became Count of Elsinore."

"But the glorious old man! tell me, is he living?"

"He is."

"O, me!"

"Ay, he who for fifty years *was* the Count of Elsinore is now simply Knut Vonved, a degraded and banished man."

"He must be a century old?"

"More than that. He is in his hundred and fourth year."

"And where is he?"

"I do not fear to tell you, my wife. He is in his native country."

"Then he has been pardoned?"

Captain Vinterdalen smiled bitterly.

"King Frederick has not granted a pardon, and Knut Vonved never sought pardon, for that would be tantamount to an admission of guilt. He would reject a 'pardon' with unutterable scorn, unless accompanied by an admission of his innocence and a restitution of his rights; and that he would deem a reconciliation, not a pardon. He, long years ago, returned from his penal exile, and, at the risk of his life paying forfeit, he has continued to secretly reside in the very capital of his country; for his love of

Denmark has only increased with his years and his unmerited wrongs ; and he hopes the last breath he inhales will be native air.”

“The risk of betrayal must have been great ?”

“Very few, indeed, know who the centenarian recluse is ; and they are men who would die rather than betray him. I believe, too, that if he were denounced, even King Frederick himself would not wish to re-banish him, nor permit him to be further molested. He who would pursue with legal vengeance a man more than a century old would be execrated by mankind. The king will probably never pardon or forgive Knut Vonved in his heart, for he must feel that he has hideously wronged him ; yet Frederick, albeit he has been cruelly vindictive, is not a monster, but a man of kingly qualities, and capable even of great generosity and magnanimity, as I have heard and believe.”

“I am glad, Vinterdalen, that your love for your outlawed friend does not render you unjust towards your sovereign. And now, tell me what befel that friend, for your story of his life approaches a great crisis, I conjecture ?”

“It does so ; the pivot of his career now turned, and in the twinkling of an eye his future life was awfully stamped with the admantine seal of inexorable destiny.”

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE TRUE STORY OF LARS VONVED—*continued.*

“I SAID,” resumed Captain Vinterdalen, “that the ship of Lars Vonved was on a cruise to Iceland and to Greenland when Count Vonved was imprisoned and tried. During this cruise the captain of the Herkules, a brave and exceedingly gentle and kind-hearted old man, with whom Lars Vonved had ever been a special favourite, died at sea on the homeward passage, and the first lieutenant, Björn Löghelle by name, and a Nordlander by birth, of course assumed the command. Lieutenant Löghelle was as much hated and feared as the deceased captain had been beloved. He was naturally a coarse, unfeeling, brutal tyrant; and although a good seaman, he was a profoundly ignorant man in every other respect, and was habitually gross, both in manners and language. More than eight months had elapsed since any news from Denmark had been received on board the

Herkules, and every one was naturally exceedingly anxious to learn what had happened in that long interval to personally interest him. The ship, on entering the Sound, was hove-to off Elsinore, expressly to obtain intelligence of the latest events of that exciting period, when our noble country—for a noble little country Denmark is!—was fighting for her very existence as a nation against a world in arms. In compliance with the signal hoisted, a boat speedily put off from Kronborg. The officer in the boat alone boarded the Herkules, bringing with him a bundle of newspapers. Lieutenant Löghelle at once led him to the cabin, to overhaul the world's news. For a full hour they remained below, and meanwhile all the officers had clustered on the quarter-deck, eagerly exchanging conjectures on the possible events which had happened, whilst the crew held whispered converse with the men in the boat at the main-channels. At length the acting captain, Lieutenant Löghelle, reappeared, and, stalking into the midst of the officers, he shouted, in a voice that was distinctly heard by every seaman on deck—‘Here's grand news! That hoary villain, Count Vonved, has been brought up with a round turn at last! Ay, jamped hard and clinched fast, and never a knife at hand to cut the seizings! The old scoundrel is condemned to die the death of a traitor! They ought to have brought him

on the scaffold forty years ago !' As he spake these words, amid the breathless silence of the officers and crew, he stared full at young Lars Vonved, whom he had long hated—for what reason he himself only knew. Lars had listened with mingled horror and incredulity; and when he could speak—for at first the shock almost paralysed him—he firmly demanded what was meant by such a statement? Lieutenant Löghelle replied by relating in a tone of triumphant malignity—referring, as he spoke, to the official gazette—the trial and condemnation of the Count of Elsinore; and he concluded by observing, with a diabolical sneer, that he would give young Lars leave of absence on the morrow, expressly to witness the public breaking of his grandfather's shields in Kongens Nytorv."

"The breaking of his shields? What does that mean?"

"I will explain. The shields of the Knights of the illustrious order of the Elephant, and also those of the Knights Grand Cross of the Dannebrog, are suspended in the gallery of the chapel of the Royal Palace of Frederiksborg, during their lifetime, and when they die, their shields are removed to a crypt, or under-ground hall, and arranged in order. The shield of Napoleon the Great has recently been added to those of the deceased knights. Count Vonved was

a Knight Grand Cross of the Dannebrog, and a Knight of the Elephant—nobles only being admitted into the latter order. For nearly sixty years his shields, or escutcheons, of the two orders had occupied a distinguished place in the gallery, and he had for some time been the senior knight of both orders. When a knight is attainted, his shield is torn down from its place of honour, and, with sound of trumpet and proclamation of heralds, is borne to the chief public square, and there literally broken to pieces by the headsman—a degradation than which nothing can surpass. And the shields of the Count of Elsinore were to be thus publicly broken in the huge place of Kongens Nytorv on the morrow, and it was to behold this frightful infamy of his grandfather that Lieutenant Löghelle proposed to grant leave of absence to Lars Vonved."

"O, the cowardly wretch! the monster! the demon!" exclaimed Madame Vinterdalen, with heartfelt abhorrence.

"Ay, he was a viperous wretch, and his proposition was fiendish. The officers and crew of the Herkules could not restrain their indignation, and murmurs and muttered execrations burst forth on every side."

"And Lars Vonved himself? What said he?"

A ghastly smile flickered o'er the lineaments of

Captain Vinterdalén, and he answered in a low terrible voice—

“Lars Vonved spoke not a word; but he uplifted his right arm, and smote the foul-mouthed tyrant—smote him to the deck, bleeding and senseless.”

“Not dead!”

“Very nearly so. The blow had horribly shattered his jaw and mouth, and it was believed he must die; but he eventually recovered, and yet lives, and yet suffers a richly merited punishment—for he is miserably maimed, and cannot articulate distinctly. Ay, a single blow from the hand of Lars Vonved heavily avenged his grandsire on that vile wretch. Lars was only a stripling of nineteen, but even then his arm was mighty to smite.”

“What I have heard, then, is true—Lars Vonved is now a man of enormous bodily strength?”

“There are doubtless stronger men in the world; but he has never yet met with one who could return his grip, or withstand his blow. But tell me, Amalia, dost thou pity Löghelle?”

“No, I do not. He deserved what befel him.”

“And dost thou condemn young Lars Vonved for smiting his captain?”

“I blame him not. There are some provocations so indescribably diabolical, that they remove the perpetrator beyond the pale even of woman’s pity; and

had Löghelle died on the spot from the blow of Lars Vonved, all my sympathy would have been with the noble youth. No human being, possessing a spark of honourable feeling, would condemn Lars Vonved for doing what he did."

A gleam of intense joy and thankfulness uplit the features of Captain Vinterdalen as he listened to the spirited words of his wife.

"And yet," continued he, "though no man worthy the name of man, condemned, in his heart, Lars Vonved, the laws—the pitiless iron laws—awarded him the penalty of death."

"Ah me!"

"That was inevitable. By the naval laws of all nations, to strike a superior officer is a crime punishable by death. The court-martial, however, strongly recommended him to the mercy of the king, on the ground that the provocation given him by Lieutenant Löghelle, as proved by the unanimous testimony of the officers of the Herkules, was most dastardly and infamous. The king did not overlook the recommendation."

"He granted mercy?"

"Ay, he granted mercy!" rejoined Captain Vinterdalen, and he fairly hissed the words through his teeth, in a manner that caused his wife to start and shudder. "What thinkest thou was this royal mercy?"

"A free pardon?" murmured Amalia, almost frightened by the look and attitude of her husband.

"A free pardon!" echoed he, with a wild gurgling laugh. "No, but a doom worse than death itself. Lars Vonved's sentence was changed to slavery for life: the last of the Valdemars was doomed, at the age of nineteen, to pass the residue of his life as a convict, a 'slave,' a constant associate of the vilest felons. There was mercy for you! royal mercy! kingly mercy! mercy from the fountain of earthly justice. Live King Frederick!"

Captain Vinterdalen's long-sustained composure began to give way as he narrated the monstrous legal cruelty to which Lars Vonved had been a victim, and so irrepressible grew his emotion, that his wife trembled, and for the first time she inwardly regretted that she had urged, and in a manner compelled him to relate the true story of the life of the Baltic Rover.

"Ay," continued he, with an increasing excitement, which he no longer cared to suppress, "they seized Lars Vonved, and clad him in the abhorrent garb of felonry—and felonry of the blackest dye, for he was classed with the very worst of criminals. The last of the Valdemars was clothed in the grey felon uniform, with black sleeves to his jacket, and an iron clasp round his leg, upheld by a bar connected with

a ring above the knee. Thus was he sent forth to labour on the roads and public works, in the day-time, and at night he was chained to a fellow-slave, and slept in a fetid dungeon in close contact with some fifty other slaves. He received only the government allowance of eight skillings ( $2\frac{1}{4}$ d.) a day, to purchase food at the slaves' commissariat, and an 8lb. loaf of black rye-bread was also given him every four days. His fellow-slave, or comrade-felon, to whom he was closely chained every night, was a man who had been a thief from childhood, and who had spent three-fourths of his life in prisons, until he was finally condemned to hopeless slavery for the remainder of his existence. With that loathsome wretch, Lars Vonved toiled—with him he ate—by his side he slept—day and night they breathed the same air, shared the same lot. Do you hear, and do you understand, Amalia?"

"Yes, Vinterdalen," answered she, in a subdued, soothing tone; "I understand, alas! only too well!"

"Ha! you comprehend, now, the 'mercy' of the king. The Book says 'the mercies of the wicked are cruel'—does it not? See! that was the mercy of King Frederick! He spared the life of the grandson of Knut Vonved—he spared the life of Lars Vonved, Count of Elsinore—for from the moment his grand-sire was attainted, Lars legally became Count of

Elsinore, since the attainder was specially restricted to the immediate offender—he spared the life, I say, of Lars Vonved, Count of Elsinore, the last descendant and representative of the ancient Kings of Denmark—spared it only to doom the youthful victim to a fate a thousand-fold worse than death!"

"Vinterdalen!" exclaimed his wife, now quite alarmed at the terrible emotion her husband openly manifested; "do not agitate yourself so—pray do not. Wilhelm, dear Wilhelm, you must"—

"Silence, wife!" sternly and fiercely cried Captain Vinterdalen. "You insisted that I should tell you the true story of Lars Vonved, and you shall have it now, happen what may. The cup is ready mixed, and you and I will drain it together to the last dregs. It was to be. I have long foreseen this inevitable hour, and it is now come. I cannot spare thee if I would. Let our destiny be fulfilled!"

He spoke with a savage vehemence, and as though proudly defiant of fate itself; but his voice had an undertone of dire misery, remorse, and despair; and his agitated lineaments and wildly gleaming eyes betokened deep agony of soul.

Madame Vinterdalen quailed, and gazed with mingled fear and amazement at her husband. His demeanour and his mysterious words were inexplicable to her, and bitterly did she now repent having

induced him to commence a narrative of the nature of which she had no conception. He marked her rising perplexity and terror, and by an exercise of the wonderful self-command which he possessed, he resumed his story in a much calmer, yet still stern and determined tone.

“Lars Vonved could have died, young as he was, with unshaken courage and resignation ; for had he been shot, as the sentence of the court-martial prescribed, such a death for such an offence would not have stained the honour of his race nor the illustrious title he rightfully bore. But to exist a felon-slave ! a manacled felon-slave for life ! Such was his doom. So Lars Vonved made a fearful compact with his soul, and ere his first week of slavery expired, he was free as the wild bird that skims o'er the blue surface of the sunny summer sea.”

“He escaped ?”

“Ay, he availed himself of the inalienable right and privilege of oppressed and outraged humanity : he bethought him of his God-given mighty strength : he arose in the dead of the midwinter night, and wrenched asunder the chain which riveted him to his comrade-slave as though it were a cotton thread, and he burst forth from the felon hell, where horrors inconceivable brooded, where atrocities unnameable were nightly perpetrated. He smote with his riven

manacles the armed guards who opposed his escape, and one of them he struck dead. But he was free! Free! with life-blood on his hand, and the gurgling death-cry of a man ringing through his brain."

"O, horror!"

"Dost thou condemn Lars Vonved for the deed?" hoarsely demanded Captain Vinterdalen.

"Alas! what can I say? I will not altogether condemn him, and I dare not pronounce him guiltless. 'Thou shalt not kill thy brother man,' is the express and eternal command of our Almighty Maker."

"It is so: but tell me, Amalia, thou who art a good and pious woman, dost thou not feel that a man may be so frightfully circumstanced that he is justified—to human reasoning—in slaying his fellow? Bethink thee well of the awful, and unbearable, and unmerited doom of Lars Vonved, and say, if thou canst, in thy heart, condemn him for resolving to escape?"

"No; in my heart and conscience I cannot condemn him for *that*!"

"Then why condemn him for the results of that escape? Self-preservation is the first law of nature, as the proverbial wisdom of the world testifies. The guards he smote, and the guard whom he slew, would have killed him on the spot without pity, had he not

o'er mastered them in self-defence. It was liberty or death with Lars Vonved—either alternative to escape from the seething hell of felon slavery. He smote not to kill, but to escape. His blow was unpreservedly, unintentionally fatal, and bitterly did he regret it."

"O, I am thankful to learn that he felt remorse!"

"Remorse! He felt grieved for the man's death, but he repented him not of his escape, albeit purchased by the life of a fellow-creature. Again I ask, dost thou condemn him?"

"Urge me not, Vinterdalen. I am only a weak, emotionable woman, and cannot answer thy subtle reasoning. It is not for me to estimate the blood-guilt—the unintentional blood-guilt, as I hope and believe—of Lars Vonved. He who readeth all hearts, and weigheth all motives in an infallible balance, alone can rightly judge. For me, I can only pity Vonved—and I do so from my very soul!"

"'Tis all I dare expect of thee!" ejaculated Vinterdalen, sighing heavily. "That was the first life-blood which stained the hands of Lars Vonved."

"Ah me! only the first?"

"He has taken life since," gloomily answered Captain Vinterdalen; "but only in open battle, and when absolutely compelled in self-defence. None blame him who know the circumstances."

"Ay, it may be that in the opinion of his fellow-men he was amply justified in so doing, but how is it in the sight of Him who judgeth the heart and the reins, and is of too pure eyes to behold iniquity? Should not Lars Vonved tremble when he remembers that at the awful judgment-seat of his Creator he will be called to account for the blood he has shed, the lives he has taken, under whatever circumstances?"

"Ha! and shall he alone be held guilty and accountable? Will not the Great Judge deem others participators, and more than participators, in his homicides? What drove Lars Vonved to be what he has been, and what he is? Thou didst freely acquit him of evil-doing when he smote his fiendish officer, and yet for that he was doomed to slavery for life, and all that he has since done amiss sprang from that one manly blow. Shall King Frederick himself not be held in some measure answerable for the unintentional death of his felon-guard at the hand of Lars Vonved? And what, after all, is the utmost possible guilt of this Lars Vonved compared with that of a crowned despot who makes war for lust of conquest, for sheer ambition, or even to avenge a supposed personal slight or insult, and ruthlessly causes the deaths of tens and hundreds of thousands of men who never injured him, and never saw his face? Yet shall this sceptred murderer of myriads have hireling priests to

bless him and to blasphemously chant Te Deums for his bloody victories, and millions of subjects to abjectly hail him as a glorious conqueror, whilst Lars Vonved, who is *not* a murderer, and only has taken the breath of life by accident, or through inevitable necessity, in self-defence, is pitilessly judged and proclaimed deserving the most frightful death to which the cruelty of man can condemn his fellow. Ha! what sayest thou to this?"

"I cannot argue with thee, Vinterdalen," meekly replied Amalia, "and it would ill become me to do so, even if I could. Be it as thou wilt, my husband, and even as thou believest in thy soul. But this only will I say, that if Lars Vonved has not any worse deed to answer for than his unintentional homicide of the felon-guard who would have slain him had he not fought in self-defence, then he is more to be pitied than condemned by his erring fellow-beings. That is my true thought; but God alone knoweth whether I am right or wrong therein."

"May He bless thee, my own noble-hearted wife!" tremulously exclaimed Captain Vinterdalen, and he added in a softened tone, "Thou hast read thy Bible to some purpose, and art a Christian indeed. And this will I now tell thee: Lars Vonved has not done any deed which he laments more heartily than the unintentional homicide of that felon-guard,

for the man was only doing his duty, and had he killed Vonved, still it was only his duty. Let me say, moreover, that Lars Vonved hath, at the imminent risk of his own life, saved the lives of others—ay, saved thrice as many lives as it hath been his unhappy lot to take."

"Ay, Vinterdalen, thou reminst me that I owe my life unto *thee*. Thy friend, Lars Vonved, never saved life more gallantly than thou didst save mine in the rushing Elbe. I was the only one saved of all on board the fated yacht, and thou, a stranger, didst rescue me at thy own deadly peril."

"I was merely an instrument in God's omnipresent hand ; and had I saved thee, Amalia, a hundred times over, yet, I aver, thou hast infinitely repaid me by becoming my wife."

"O, Vinterdalen ! O, my husband ! I feel at this moment that Love is stronger than Death, and that had Lars Vonved himself saved me as thou didst save me, I verily think I could and would have loved him, and cleaved unto him, even as I loved and clave, and ever will cleave unto thee, whilst my heart beats in my bosom !"

What secret anguish is it that shakes the strong soul of Captain Vinterdalen at these words of his devoted wife ? He utters a groan of agony, he spreads his hands across his face, and burning tears trickle

slowly through his closed fingers. His wife's heart throbs responsive, and thrice she half arises as though to fling herself in his arms, but some inward impulse—it may be awful respect for her husband's unwonted emotion—restrains her.

Suddenly Captain Vinterdalen uplifts his head—his soul-struggles have ceased—he is sternly composed, and evinces little outward indication of the stormy passions which lately agitated him. He resumes his narrative in a tone as firm, clear, measured, and thoughtful as that in which he spake until he described the appalling crisis in the fate of Lars Vonved.

"A heavy price," said he, "was put on the head of Lars Vonved—henceforth Vonved the Outlaw!—but he escaped beyond the seas, and went direct to the country in which his exiled grandsire had obtained a temporary refuge. He sought and found that aged victim of despotism—found him only to obtain one farewell interview. What passed between them Lars Vonved has never told to living being. It is enough to know that Knut Vonved's love and pride of his grandson was only increased by what had befallen the latter, and he solemnly blessed Lars ere they parted never to meet again."

"Has Lars Vonved never seen his grandsire since then?"

"No; both of them felt that their parting was forever."

"They may meet again even yet?"

"Never more on earth."

"And what became of Lars—so young, and already so fearfully tried?"

"He immediately sailed for Europe, and during the ensuing ten years he led a roving life on nearly every ocean and sea of the globe."

"He continued to follow his profession?"

"Ay, he first entered the naval service of one of the republics of South America, which had shaken off the Spanish yoke, but he soon grew disgusted with the service, although he had attained a separate command within six months, for he found the nascent navy little, if any thing, better than a buccaneering squadron. Subsequently, however, when the great British captain, Lord Cochrane, accepted in 1818, the command-in-chief of the Chilian fleet, he obtained command of a corvette belonging to that power, for he felt that he might serve with pride under the most brilliant seaman-warrior who had arisen since the death of Nelson—albeit England had cruelly punished that noble successor to her race of Blakes, Rodney's, Hoods, St. Vincents, Duncans, and Nelsons, and had deprived him of his nobly-earned honours, and declared him incapable of serving her again, all because

he had been an unconscious tool in the hands of swindling speculators in 1814. On the 5th November, 1820, Lars Vonved had the honour of serving personally under Lord Cochrane, when the latter cut out the forty-gun Spanish frigate, *Esmeralda*, lying under protection of the batteries of the castle of Callao. Fourteen boats, one of which Lars Vonved commanded, manned by 240 men, all volunteers from the different ships of the Chilian squadron, were led to this desperate enterprise by Lord Cochrane in person, and after a terrible midnight conflict, in which the Spanish crew had 120 killed and wounded, and the Chilian boarders, forty-one, the *Esmeralda* was captured, and triumphantly cut-out and carried off in spite of the heavy fire from the batteries. This exploit of Lord Cochrane rivals any similar one on record, and no action in which Lars Vonved was engaged, either before or since, has yielded him so much satisfaction in the retrospect, for he fought in an honourable cause—ay, and a sacred cause, as the Chilians were battling for liberty against Spanish tyranny, and the capture of the *Esmeralda* gave the death-blow to the Spanish naval supremacy on the coast. A few weeks subsequently to this memorable affair Lars Vonved voluntarily resigned his commission."

"Oh, why did he not continue in a service which at least was honourable?"

" 'Tis little thou knowest of the Chilian service, or thou wouldest rather marvel that Lars Vonved had not quitted it sooner. The officers of the Chilian navy were nearly all foreigners, and some of them were men whose antecedents were of an exceedingly questionable nature. But the Chilian government never required certificates of character. So long as a man was an able and daring officer, he was thoroughly qualified to hoist their flag. Lars Vonved was an outlaw in his own country, but never had he yet committed a dishonourable deed, and he blushed with shame and humiliation to find himself occasionally associated with brother officers who were unmitigated scoundrels, atrocious miscreants, possessing no redeeming features but their nautical skill and reckless valour. The wild and desperate service of the Chilian navy suited the temperament of Lars Vonved very well, but he loathed to serve with and to command men who were devoid of honourable feelings and aspirations, and were pirates at heart, and little better than pirates in practice when opportunity served. Besides this, he considered himself ill-treated by the Chilian authorities, who were notoriously ungrateful to the foreign officers, without whose skilful aid they probably would never have achieved the independence of their country. Some of the Chilian officers, especially those who were British subjects,

nobly contrasted with the character and conduct of others; and in various grades of the service, from the commander-in-chief down to petty officers, men were to be met with who would have reflected honour on any flag in the world. With one officer of this class, Lars Vonved contracted a brotherly friendship —a friendship which death alone will sever."

"Who was he?"

"An Englishman who served as first lieutenant of the Chilian corvette Vonved commanded. His name was Marmaduke Dunraven, a scion of the younger branch of a very ancient and noble family, and he had commenced life as a midshipman in the British navy. In his twenty-second year he obtained a lieutenant's commission, but not many months subsequently, he mortally quarrelled with his captain, on discovering that the latter had most infamously supplanted him in the affections of a young lady whom poor Dunraven passionately loved, and whose miniature he yet wears on his breast, and ever will wear, I believe, until his heart ceases to beat. He openly reproached the captain with his abominable treachery, and challenged him. The result was that Dunraven was tried by a court-martial and dismissed the service. This happened on the Pacific station, and shortly afterwards Lars Vonved met Dunraven at Valparaiso, and became somewhat intimate with him. They

parted, and a year subsequently they met again, respectively as commander and first lieutenant of a Chilian corvette. Thus thrown together in daily intercourse, the Dane and the Englishman speedily became warmly attached, for they appreciated each other, and entertained mutual sympathy and esteem. Dunraven was a manly, noble-minded fellow, but he was naturally of a saturnine disposition, and his private wrongs and his blasted professional prospects, had then made him, what he probably will ever be, a reserved, stern, and melancholy man. Yet he opened his whole heart to Lars Vonved, who in return confided his own sad history to his English friend. Henceforth their careers became inseparably linked. Dunraven vowed that he would ever faithfully share the fortunes of the Count of Elsinore, and well has he redeemed his pledge. Of course, when Vonved threw up his Chilian commission, Dunraven imitated him therein, and together they roved in many a remote land and sea, leading a life of perilous adventure. At length they purchased at Sierra Leone, a large condemned slaver, refitted her, and sailed for Europe. Lars Vonved had made up his mind to see his native land once more, even at the risk of his life. Having run the gauntlet of the Sound, regardless of a cannon-shot from the Castle of Kronborg, as a signal to heave to, he roved the Baltic for some time,

maturing his plans for the future. By degrees he gathered a crew of veteran seamen on whom he could thoroughly depend on any emergency, and besides his larger vessel, the Skildpadde, he had a beautiful small joegt, which he christened the Little Amalia."

"Ah! that was in compliment to some namesake of mine?" shrewdly questioned Madame Vinterdalen.

"It was so."

"O, tell me about *her*!"

"The Little Amalia?"

"No, no! not the joegt, but the lady after whom she was named?"

Captain Vinterdalen gazed at his wife with an inscrutable expression; but instead of complying with her request, he continued his narrative.

"Nearly all of Vonved's officers and crew were men whom misfortune, and in some instances crime, had rendered outlaws like himself, but once under his command, they were trained to habits of perfect obedience and strict discipline, and, moreover, he and they were bound together by an awful mutual compact. When he found his followers sufficiently numerous and devoted to his service, he commenced that phase of his career which has earned for him the appellation of the Baltic Rover. I mentioned that Christian I. had granted to the Count of Elsinore, in

perpetuity, a certain share of the income derivable from the Sound Dues, and this had been paid them down to the period when the grandfather of Lars Vonved was iniquitously attainted, and his rights, privileges, and heritages, consequently were forfeited. Lars Vonved held council with his conscience, and mentally argued thus :—‘ My grandsire has been unjustly attainted, and I, his heir and successor to his title and rights, am legally but immorally, deprived of the inalienable inheritance of my forefathers. I have a clear moral right to obtain restitution of my heritage, but I can never obtain it legally. What I cannot get by legal right, I will by physical might, and in my case might will indeed be right.’ He calculated the arrears which he considered due unto him, and also the portion for the current year, and forthwith commenced a daring system of reprisal, capturing government property wheresoever he could, generally at sea, in vessels of inferior force to his own, and incapable of successfully resisting him (for he earnestly wished to avoid bloodshed), and occasionally at custom-houses, and naval depôts, adjacent to the shore. By this means he speedily seized sufficient to cover the arrears due to him, and ever since he has annually obtained what he considers payment of his heritage, in the same manner. He has kept a very accurate account (audited by his officers, and verified

by their signatures) of the money and the money's worth he has forcibly seized, and he has conscientiously abstained from taking one skilling's value beyond the sum rightly due to him. Dost thou think him justifiable in all this, Amalia?"

Amalia made a silent gesture, equally expressive of amazement and dissent, and she significantly asked if Lars Vonved's own conscience did or did not rebuke him.

Her husband replied with some deliberation, but he firmly denied that Vonved was criminally guilty.

"He only takes what is his own, withheld from him by a cruel and unjust sentence of the law, and remember, Amalia, that which he forcibly takes is the property of the king—national property. No private individual suffers loss thereby. Vonved is legally wrong, but morally right."

"*He* may think so, but I cannot. Tell me, Vinterdalen, does not Vonved capture merchantmen, and"—

"Capture merchantmen!" thundered Captain Vinterdalen, his features blazing with indignation, mingled with profound surprise at the idea. "What! after all that I have told thee of the lineage and the personal character of Lars Vonved, dost thou still imagine him to be capable of such an atrocity? Piracy! rank piracy! the Count of Elsinore stoop

to *that*? No! he would die a thousand deaths rather than do such a thing. Lars Vonved a pirate!" repeated he, in a tone of ineffable scorn. "Never has Lars Vonved wronged any man of the value of a feather. That which he takes from King Frederick is his own, wickedly denied him, whatever the world may think or say to the reverse."

"Be not wroth with me, Vinterdalen," gently urged Amalia, "but thou thyself has just told me that most of Vonved's crew are outlaws—some through misfortune, others through crime. Vonved may scorn to commit an act of piracy, but who shall answer for his desperate crew?"

"Vonved himself," proudly and sternly replied Vinterdalen. "Woe betide the follower of Lars Vonved who dares to commit a dishonest deed whilst sailing under his flag! The laws and ordinances of *his* service are far more severe than those of King Frederick's own navy, and the penalty for any offence is unrelentingly enforced."

"Vonved is a veritable Sea-King!" exclaimed Madame Vinterdalen, more and more astonished and perplexed at every fresh revelation she heard.

"Ay, he may not untruly be so designated, albeit the world dubs him the Baltic Rover. He accepts that title, for a rover he certainly is, but a pirate—never!"

" Yet," pursued Amalia, " how does he maintain his large crew?"

" Hitherto he has found his revenue amply sufficient to liberally pay them, and they are well content to risk their lives in his desperate service—for a desperate service it is, insomuch as the life of any follower of his would inevitably be forfeited were he to fall in the clutches of the Danish government."

" And has that never happened?"

" Several of Vonved's crew have, from time to time been captured, but Vonved never failed to rescue them from their impending doom, either by open force or secret manœuvre. On one occasion Lieutenant Dunraven was taken prisoner through imprudently going ashore at a small sea-port where a Danish frigate happened to be lying in harbour, and he was recognised, seized, and conveyed on board her. She was to sail within eight-and-forty hours for Copenhagen, and if she once arrived there with Dunraven, his case was indeed desperate. Lars Vonved instantly planned the deliverance of his friend. The captain of the frigate invariably spent the day at the town, and came off to his ship late in the evening in his gig. The evening of the day subsequent to Dunraven's capture, proved highly favourable for Vonved's design, being dark, rainy, and squally. His two vessels, the Skildpadde and the Little Amalia,

hovered closely off the harbour after nightfall, and he himself quitted them in a boat, manned by a powerful armed crew."

"Ah, I can guess his intention!" exclaimed Amalia. "He meant to seize the captain of the frigate himself as a hostage for Dunraven—did he not? What a desperate design!"

"Lars Vonved would have done something incomparably more desperate to save his bosom friend, had it been necessary—but it was not. The frigate's gig returned from the town unusually late that night, and when half-way from the shore, Vonved boarded and carried it by surprise. There was a brief struggle and some little bloodshed, but happily no one was dangerously wounded. Captain Gaffel and his gig's crew were secured, and threatened with immediate death if they made any outcry. In another hour they were on board the Skildpadde. 'Captain Gaffel,' said Vonved, 'I do not wish to harm a hair of your head, but it now rests entirely with yourself whether you quit this vessel alive or not. You have my chief officer a prisoner in your frigate, and I have seized you and your people as hostages for his safety.' 'What would you have? What can I do?' asked the astounded captain. 'You must instantly write a peremptory order to your first lieutenant,' answered Vonved, 'instructing him to release Lieutenant Dun-

raven, and to deliver him to the bearers of the order. If you do this, and my officer safely returns on board before daybreak, I will immediately liberate you and your gig's crew : refuse, and *your* life shall infallibly answer for *his* life !' Captain Gaffel was not a very brilliant officer, but he was an exceedingly sensible man. He knew enough of Lars Vonved to be aware that the Rover would rigidly do what he threatened, fearless of all consequences, and, in a word, he complied. He wrote the required order at Vonved's dictation, and one of the Skildpadde's boats was immediately despatched with it to the frigate. On approaching the latter, the coxswain of the boat answered the hail of the sentinels by saying it was a shore-boat with a letter from the captain to the first lieutenant, requiring immediate delivery. The boat was then permitted to come alongside the frigate, and the letter was handed on board. The first lieutenant read it with astonishment, but he well knew that the handwriting was no forgery, and as the order it conveyed was most precise and peremptory, he dared not hesitate to obey. Very probably he imagined that his captain had discovered that their prisoner was not the man they had believed, especially as Captain Gaffel's note mentioned that he himself should not return on board until Dunraven had re-landed. Be this as it may, no questions were asked of the men

in the supposed shore-boat, and Dunraven was at once permitted to depart in her. He was speedily restored to his Rover friends, and Vonved forthwith set the involuntary hostages at liberty; and poor Captain Gaffel rowed away in his gig in a state of mind by no means enviable."

"And did he not pursue the Rover in his frigate as soon as he got on board?"

"Pursue Vonved's vessels in his rotten old tub of a jackass frigate!" laughed Captain Vinterdalen. "Why, he might as well have sailed in chase of the clouds scudding in the sky overhead! Even had it been broad noon-day, before his frigate could have weighed anchor and made sail, the Skildpadde would have been hull down in the horizon. Vonved's vessels were the swiftest that ever"—

"Ah, Vinterdalen, didst not thou thyself erewhile remark that the race was not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong? Sooner or later thy friend Lars Vonved may know this to his fatal cost."

"He knows it well enough already, and he is not a purblind boaster. He is well aware that although his keels are the fleetest that ever parted the waters of the Baltic, yet an unforeseen surprise, or an unavoidable accident, may at any time place his vessels in deadly jeopardy. Yet it is the literal truth, that hitherto he has successfully defied the eager efforts of

all the ships of King Frederick to capture them, but he himself has more than once, twice, or thrice, been captured and dungeoned—always with the same result."

"So I have heard; but surely he cannot hope that the same marvellous good fortune will always attend him?"

"Good fortune! He is not a heathen, and he neither believes in good fortune nor in bad fortune, nor in his star, nor in any superstitious fantasy, nor does he rely on any thing but his own resources, under the blessing of Providence. Yet he feels in his inmost soul that his career from first to last has been fore-ordained, and while acting as a free agent, he nevertheless bows to the decree of Omnipotence, and says in his heart, Let my destiny be fulfilled!"

"And dost thou assure me, on thy honour, Vinterdalen, that Lars Vonved is *not* guilty of piracy, and the thousand crimes and atrocities which he is popularly believed to have perpetrated?"

"Ay, that I do, without one atom of equivocation or reservation. I have told thee the worst that can truly be laid to his charge—thou knowest the 'very head and front of his offending.' See what a consummate liar Rumour is! Wilt thou ever again believe the hundredth part of the evil attributed to any human being by the myriad-tongued voice of

that false and foolish abstraction, popular Rumour?"

"But how is it that although the name of the Baltic Rover is terribly familiar throughout our country, people only speak of him as Lars Vonved? I never heard him alluded to as the Count of Elsinore. Do his own followers know that he is the last of the regal line of Valdemar, and that he is legally entitled to bear the illustrious title of Count of Elsinore?"

"They all know it well, and many who are not his adherents know it also. But Lars Vonved, when he commenced his reprisals on King Frederick—when he first seized by force the heritage which was unjustly confiscated and withheld from him—resolved that, being outlawed, he would not bring a shadow even of apparent dishonour on the lofty title which had descended to him ere the decease of its rightful possessor, and he therefore carefully abstained from assuming it, or permitting himself to be addressed as the Count of Elsinore. Thus it is that the world only knows him as Lars Vonved, and his officers and crew address him simply as Captain Vonved, by his own earnest wish and express command."

"Ah, I can appreciate *that* trait in his proud nature."

"And now, Amalia, thou knowest the true story of Lars Vonved."

"I know somewhat—but I would know more!" retorted Amalia, with a keen and anxious glance at her husband.

"More! what more canst thou desire to know?"

"More—much more!" reiterated she, gravely and significantly. "I wish to know about my namesake, the lady in honour of whom Lars Vonved christened his little *joægt*, 'Amalia;' and, above all, I *must* know the story of his wife. Amalia and his wife—are they not one and the same?"

"Thou art a true woman," said Captain Vinterdalén, with a haggard smile; "and dost intuitively pluck the heart of the mystery!"

"Then I am right?"

"Even so."

"Well! and who *is* this Amalia?"

"The wife of Lars Vonved."

"Yes, yes! but who *was* she?"

Instead of answering the question, Captain Vinterdalén gazed at his wife with the same inscrutable expression which had so startled and perplexed her before, and he slowly, and as it were abstractedly, repeated—"who was she?"

"Yes, that is what you must tell me, and how she became"—

"The victim of Lars Vonved?"

"Victim! O Vinterdalén!" and Amalia blushed

with the consciousness that her husband read her inmost thoughts as easily as the open pages of a book, whilst the expression of *his* countenance was to her unfathomable.

"Ay, victim ! for didst thou not say that thy heart bled for the woman whose miserable lot it is to be the wife of the outlaw Vonved ?"

"Ah ! but that was before I knew his true story."

"Then thy thoughts of Lars Vonved are not so hard as they were ?"

"My opinion of him has undergone some change."

"Is that all ?"

"I think," added Madame Vinterdalen, with a little hesitation, "that, as you said, he is possibly more sinned against than sinning."

Even this admission did not seem to satisfy Captain Vinterdalen.

"As much as may be truly said of thousands of outlaws and criminal outcasts !" muttered he.

"But Vonved's wife !" again urged Amalia. "My namesake—tell me of *her*. How did Vonved win her affection ?"

"Even as I won thine—by saving her life at the risk of *his* own."

"O me ! what a coincidence !"

"Ay, she resembles thee in more than name."

"But did she know who Vonved really was when she gave him her heart?"

"She knew he snatched her from the yawning jaws of death. Was not that enough for her to know?"

As Captain Vinterdalen uttered these subtle words, he once more darted a soul-penetrating glance at his wife, whose curiosity was now excited to a painful degree, mingled with a vague yet palpable sensation of personal interest of an inexplicable yet dread nature.

"No," resumed he, "she knew not that her preserver was the outlaw, Lars Vonved. Had she known that, perhaps she"—

"She *must* have known it ere long!" eagerly interrupted Madame Vinterdalen. "Vonved could not marry her without revealing his identity with the Rover, and moreover, I feel that he would not."

"Would not!"

"No, the chivalric spirit of honour inherent in the blood of Valdemar would never permit him to *so* deceive the woman who loved him. Am I not right?"

Captain Vinterdalen's features sharply contracted as though a dead man's hand had gripped his heart, and his clenched teeth emitted a smothered sound of anguish—half cry, half groan. The spasm was brief as poignant, and when it passed away he was outwardly calm and unmoved.

"Suppose, then," said he, in a subdued, plaintive, and slightly tremulous tone, "that Lars Vonved *did* reveal unto his betrothed whom he was, and what he was—dost thou still desire to know how thy namesake received his confession?"

"O yes! tell me all, I beseech thee!" cried she, with an eager gesture.

"I know the very words which were spoken by Lars Vonved and Amalia his betrothed—wilt thou hear them?"

"Ah yes! repeat to me every word!" and as she spake, Madame Vinterdalen leant forward, trembling with undisguised anxiety, her features flushed, her eyes luminous.

"I will do so," said her husband, and a peculiarly tender and touching expression o'erspread his face; "and thou wilt bear in mind that the words are those of Lars Vonved and Amalia, after Vonved had told her the true story of his life, even as I have told it thee this night."

"Yes, yes, I perfectly understand."

"Well!" exclaimed Captain Vinterdalen, drawing a long, quivering breath, and looking piercingly at his wife, "they spake—*thus*:

"‘Amalia,’ said Vonved, ‘I have told thee whom I am, and what I have done: my wrongs, my errors,

my sorrows, my deeds of violence—thou now knowest all. That I have ever striven to live up to an almost chivalric ideal of honour: that I am more sinned against than sinning: that not my own passions but a merciless Destiny has shaped my wild and terrible career—all matters nought. The die has been cast, and I must abide it. Heaven is my witness that when I wooed and won thy love, I believed I could make thee happy as the wife of my bosom, but now that is impossible.'

"‘Impossible?’

"‘Ay, I speak with the calmness of despair; I say it is impossible. There is guilt on my soul: there is blood upon my hand—why dost thou press it to thy heart?’

"‘To wipe that blood away!’

"‘And thou weepest?’

"‘To wash out the remembrance of thy guilt!’

"‘Amalia, if an angel’s tears could blot out the record of my sins in heaven, I verily think thine would be as efficacious upon earth. But it cannot be. I have sown the wind and must reap the whirlwind. I never loved but thee, and henceforth the memory only of that love will be all that remains unto me.’

"‘The memory only?’

"‘I have said it, Amalia. The love itself will

never perish; but it were guilt added unto guilt to longer indulge in the selfish idea of its realization.'

"'Oh, Vonved!'

"'I have wronged thee, Amalia, in winning thy heart, for I could only offer thee a hand which, as thou knowest, is'——

"'I understand thee: no more of that.'

"'I could have borne my doom had I never seen—never loved thee?'

"'Is my love a curse?'

"'Amalia! dost thou think that when a lost spirit views the gleaming gates of Paradise from afar, conscious that they are closed for ever unto him, he feels any thing but an unspeakable augmentation of his agony and despair? Thou art my earthly Paradise—but it is now for ever forbidden me.'

"'It is not.'

"'Thy heart speaks—not thy mind.'

"'My heart, my mind, my soul!'

"'No, Amalia, the veil has fallen from my selfish vision, and even thy voice shall not allure me deeper into error and remorse. The brand is on my brow, and I go forth a hopeless outcast.'

"'Alone thou wilt not go.'

"'Amalia, for the love of God tempt me not! We must part for ever.'

"'Not till death!'

“ ‘ Whatever I once was, I am an outlaw—a price is on my head—an ignominious doom o’erhangs me ! ’

“ ‘ Thou hast the more need of my love ! ’

“ ‘ I cannot kneel with thee, Amalia—thou so pure and innocent, I so guilty and lost ! ’

“ ‘ Lars Vonved ! heaven will listen unto thy prayers with more joy than unto mine ! God’s ears are ever open, and had every act of thy life been a mortal sin there is yet pardon and acceptance for thee. Say no more : thy lot is mine—mine is thine. Thou art not the monster thou wouldest persuade me ; and for what thou hast done amiss forgiveness may be earned, and we shall be happy even on earth, and win heaven together. I will cling to thee, and love thee, and cherish thee more than ever I should have done hadst thou not revealed thy secret history ! ’

“ ‘ Amalia ! ’

“ ‘ Lead me this night to the altar ; let the priest of God unite us, and ere sunrise I will flee with thee to the remote climes thou hast oft described ; and a new life shall dawn on thee, and thou shalt become reconciled to thy fellow-men, to thyself, and to thy God ! ’

“ ‘ Amalia ! ’

“ ‘ Yes, I am Amalia, thy betrothed, and I will be Amalia the wife of thy bosom, and thy lot shall be my lot, thy country my country, thy God my

God. Together we will live, and the same pang that rends thy heart shall rend mine. In life, in death, we will be one ! ”

Captain Vinterdalen ceased abruptly : he had said quite enough. His wife sat motionless as one entranced, but her hands trembled, her lips quivered, and her heart fluttered and throbbed in her bosom.

“ Thinkest thou that Vonved’s Amalia said that which she ought to have said ? ”

“ Had she spoken other words she were not worthy to become the wife of Lars Vonved ! ” vehemently exclaimed Madame Vinterdalen.

“ Ha ! and thou—wouldst *thou* have clung the closer unto Vonved had he made such a revelation unto thee, and hadst thou promised to marry him, ignorant whom he really was ? ”

“ Would I not ! Yea, verily, I would have loved him a thousand-fold more than ever ! ” was the passionate response. “ Little dost thou know the heart of woman, or of what she is capable, or thou wouldst not ask the question.”

“ Wo, then, for Lars Vonved ! ”

“ What meanest thou, Vinterdalen ? ”

“ Vonved did *not* tell Amalia who he was before she became his wife. The conversation I have just repeated is imaginary.”

"Did it not ensue between them?"

"Would to God it had!"

"Then why didst thou repeat it to me as real?"

"That I might learn how *thou* wouldst have acted in the place of Vonved's betrothed. He feared to tell her that he was the outlaw, Vonved, lest she should cease to love him, and never become his wife."

"Alas! why had he not faith in the holy love of the woman who owed her life unto him? She *would* have responded to his confession even as thou hast imagined her to do."

"Ay, he knows it now. Bitter has been his remorse. An evil spirit oft has whispered unto him: 'This thy wife whom thou lovest, and who loves thee devotedly; she whose happiness is centred in thee, who sleeps in thy bosom, and is the mother of thy boy, tell her whom thou really art, and she will curse thee to thy face, and flee from thee as from a fiend.'"

"A fiend must have suggested such hideous misgivings unto him."

"Then thou believest that Vonved's wife would forgive him even now, and continue to love him and cleave to him, were he to say unto her: 'I have deceived thee, my wife, these many years. Lo! I am not he whom thou believest. I am Lars Vonved, the Outlaw—Vonved, the Baltic Rover!'"

"Forgive him even now! What! does not the wife of Vonved yet know whom her husband really is?"

"She knew not yesternight!" responded Captain Vinterdalen, in a voice indescribably solemn and awe-striking.

For a moment Madame Vinterdalen did not fully comprehend the import of these few momentous words, but for the first time a suspicion of the fearful truth indicated by this and the many other mysterious expressions of her husband, conjoined with his amazing familiarity with the secret history of Lars Vonved, and his unaccountable emotion, and his jealous defence of the deeds of the Rover, flashed through her brain, and she sprang to her feet with a cry that seemed to burst from her very heart.

Captain Vinterdalen arose simultaneously, and husband and wife gazed at each other with terrible intensity.

"Vinterdalen!" at length ejaculated his wife, in a tone that thrilled to his heart's core, "in the name of God, what meanest thou?"

He uttered not a syllable, although his lips moved involuntarily, and a sharp spasm convulsed his lineaments.

"Speak, for the love of God!"

He did attempt to speak, but the words he would have uttered were smothered, choked by the awful emotion that shook his frame.

A third time did the piteous appeal of his wife ring through his heart, brain, and soul.

"Speak!" cried she; "tell me what thou meanest—tell me, or I shall die!"

She smote her breast with one hand as she spoke, and the other she clutched hard over her heart, as though fain to check its dreadful throbbing.

"Who art thou? Tell me for the love of God!—tell me, or I die!"

"I am thine husband."

"My husband! and who is *he*? Art thou,—O, Himlen,—art thou indeed none other than"—

"I am he whose true story thou hast heard."

"O, my heart!—my God, have mercy upon me!—Who art *thou*? Tell me, or my heart will burst!"

"I, thine husband, am Lars Vonved, Count of Elsinore!"

An appalling—a heartrending cry of the direst agony shrilly echoed through the room.

Lars Vonved—Captain Vinterdalen no longer strode a step forward as though to support his wife, who stood rigid as a statue, both her arms extended straight before her, and her features frozen, as it

were, in the extremity of terror and horror. Lars Vonved turned round, and lo! the door was wide open, and on the threshold stood an officer, drawn sword in hand, and behind him the whole passage bristled with the bayonets of King Frederick's soldiers.

END OF VOL. I.









